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As 6,000 have died waiting for help, campaigners say it is finally time to...

GET A GRIP ON SOCIAL CARE CRISIS

BY **JONATHAN WALKER**
Whitehall Editor

A CRISIS in social care meant more than 6,000 people died as they waited to hear if they would be given urgently needed help.

The toll highlights the delays faced by adults who seek support. Campaigners accused ministers of failing to act, after a cross-party commission set up by Sir Keir Starmer to fix the problem met just once in 12 months.

The figures were uncovered by the Lib Dems, who are urging the PM to take direct charge of finding a solution.

Party health spokesperson Helen Morgan MP said: "He needs to personally get a grip of this crisis, end this negligence and finally show whose side he's on.

"It is a national tragedy that 6,000 elderly and vulnerable people have died

TURN TO PAGE 4

Snow fun as Britain is hit by -10C Arctic blast

SEE PAGE 3

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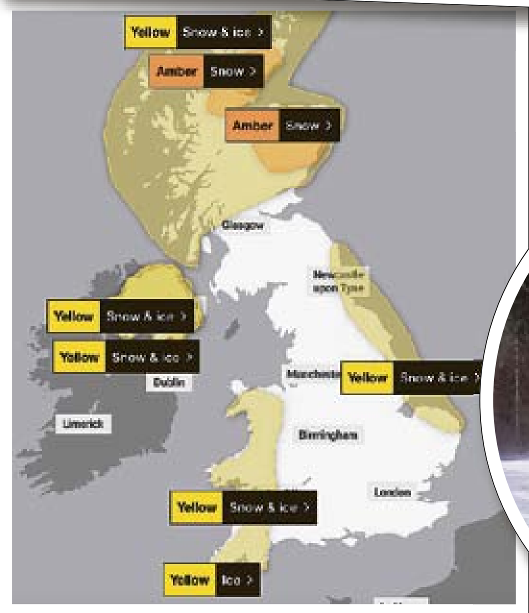
-10C wintry warnings

Arctic temperatures will grip UK for days

Snow blankets Flintshire, North Wales yesterday



A motorist digs out his car in Aberdeenshire, top. Sledgers have fun in Warwickshire, above. More icy roads in Kent, below, are expected after yellow and amber warnings, left

BY **CHRIS RICHES**

SNOW, ice and Arctic temperatures of minus 10C will hit parts of Britain through the weekend into Monday, as Met Office weather warnings were extended by another two days.

Swathes of the UK already boast a white, wintry look after parts of the nation woke to freezing temperatures, icy pavements and roads, and snow-covered hills yesterday.

Now the Met Office has extended warnings due to expire today until 3pm Monday, after Friday saw up to 40cm (15in) of snow hitting parts of Scotland and up to 5cm across England and Wales.

The most severe conditions are in Scotland, where amber warnings are already in effect until 12pm today.

Disruption

Describing the amber warning, the Met Office said: “Heavy snow showers will become more frequent and may merge to give longer spells of snow at times.”

Yellow warnings for snow and ice were also activated for London, southern England, the Midlands and North West, as well as for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Delays and cancellations to rail and air travel, disruption on the roads and power cuts are all expected as a result of the wintry conditions.

Scottish regions affected by the “blizzard conditions” include Angus, Perth and Kinross, Grampian, Aberdeenshire, Moray and parts of the Highlands. The Scottish gritter and snow plough fleet, with names such as Sir Andy Flurry, Robert Brrrns and Plougher O’Scotland is already out in force across the country’s road network.

People are being urged to plan routes carefully and to pack essentials in cars in the event of delays.

The Met Office expects daytime temperatures across the UK will struggle to top 0C and could even fall into the minus double digits over the coming days.

Met Office chief meteorologist Rebekah Hicks said: “Arctic air and brisk northerly winds are gripping the UK. Snow and ice warnings remain in force for many areas, with the risk of heavy snow showers, especially across northern Scotland and over higher ground elsewhere.

“Bitterly cold conditions will persist through the weekend and into next week, with daytime temperatures struggling to rise above freezing for some, and overnight lows dipping to minus double figures in places.”

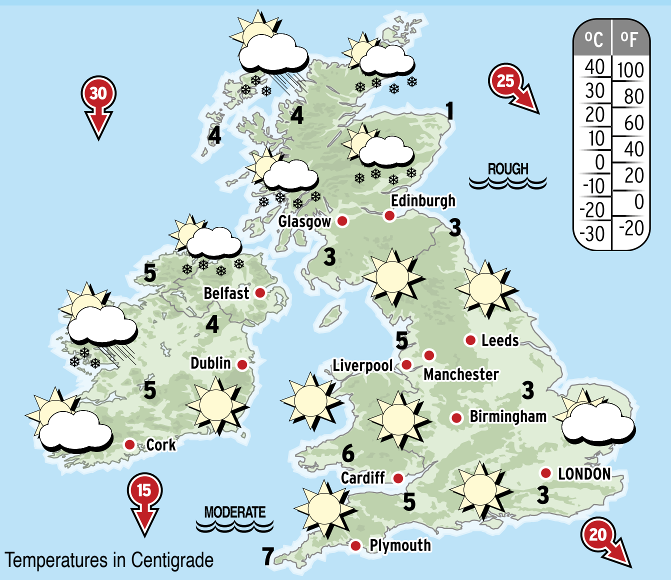
The UK Health Security Agency extended its amber cold health alert for all of England until next Friday.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting warned that the “bitingly cold snap” will put extra pressure on NHS hospitals as he urged people to only attend A&E for emergencies.

He said: “Let’s all join NHS staff in doing everything we can to protect ourselves and our families through a difficult winter, so NHS services are free for those who really need them.”

OPINION: PAGE 14

WEATHER FORECAST



Temperatures in Centigrade

Today's summary: Chilly start; clear night

North West: Sunny spells with clear skies later. Breezy with a cool feel throughout the day. High 3C (37F).

Northern Ireland: Cloudy with snow early, turning brighter with sunny spells. Breezy, turning chilly. High 4C (39F).

Wales: Bright and sunny spells, clear later. Moderate breezes easing, becoming cool overnight. High 5C (41F).

Midlands: Fine and dry with long periods of sunshine. Moderate north-westerly winds. Very cold. High 3C (37F).

North East/Yorks: Dry and fine with lengthy spells of wintry sunshine. Light winds. Very cold. High 3C (37F).

Scotland: Sunshine with some cloud. Clearer skies later. Gentle winds. Chilly throughout. High 2C (36F).

East Anglia: Sunny spells early, turning snowy. Breezy with brisk winds. Chilly throughout. High 3C (37F).

London/South East: A dry day with clear skies and sunshine. Moderate south-westerly winds. Very cold. High 4C (39F).

South: A dry and fine day with plenty of wintry sunshine. Moderate northerly winds. Very cold. High 4C (39F).

South West: Sunshine throughout. Clear skies later. Breezy at times, with chilly temperatures. High 5C (41F).

Channel Isles: The odd shower is possible for a time, but sunny periods as well. Fresh westerly winds. High 6C (43F).

Sea: North Sea: Rough. Irish Sea: Moderate. Channel: Rough.

UK OUTLOOK TOMORROW: Expect frosty starts, turning milder with sunny spells. Light winds throughout, with clear skies in the evening.

SIX-DAY FORECAST Temperatures in Centigrade

	SUN			MON			TUE			WED			THU			FRI		
		min	max		min	max		min	max		min	max		min	max		min	max
London	☀	-3	4	⛅	-4	3	⛅	0	3	🌦❄	-1	3	🌧	0	4	🌦	0	4
Belfast	⛅❄	-1	3	⛅	-1	3	🌨	0	4	🌨	1	3	🌦	1	4	🌦	1	3
Birmingham	☀	-4	3	⛅	-4	2	⛅❄	-1	3	☁	-1	2	🌦	0	3	🌦❄	-1	3
Cardiff	☀	-1	5	⛅	-2	4	🌦	1	5	🌧	0	5	🌦	2	6	🌦	1	6
Glasgow	☀	-3	4	☀	0	4	🌨	-1	5	❄	0	4	🌦❄	0	4	🌨	0	3
Manchester	⛅❄	-4	3	☀	-4	2	⛅❄	-2	3	🌨	-1	2	🌨	0	2	🌦❄	-1	3
Newcastle	☀	-3	2	☀	-3	2	⛅	-1	3	🌨	-1	2	🌨	-1	2	🌦❄	0	2
Norwich	☀	-3	2	⛅	-4	3	☀	0	2	🌨	0	3	🌨	0	3	🌦❄	0	3
Plymouth	🌦❄	1	5	🌦	0	5	🌧	3	6	🌧	4	6	🌧	5	7	🌧	3	7

Britain yesterday

24 hours to 5pm	SUN (hrs)	RAIN (ins)	TEMP (min)	(max)
Aberdeen	1.3	0.08	-1	1
Aberporth	1.2	0.07	1	5
Alnwick	3.6	0.01	0	4
Belfast	5.0	0.18	0	5
Birmingham	4.5	0.07	0	3
B'mouth	4.1	0.05	-1	5
Bristol	5.8	0.05	3	5
Cardiff	5.5	0.04	1	6
Durham	4.0	0.00	-1	3
Edinburgh	3.2	0.00	-1	3
Glasgow	5.2	0.00	0	4
Hull	6.5	0.00	0	3
Ipswich	6.8	0.00	-1	2
Leeds	5.0	0.00	0	3
Lincoln	6.6	0.00	0	3
London	6.3	0.09	1	4
Manchester	4.4	0.00	0	4
Oxford	6.3	0.00	1	4
S'hampton	5.5	0.03	2	5
St Andrews	5.0	0.00	0	4

Moon, sun and tides

MOON rises: 3.48pm, sets: 8.42am
SUN rises London: 8.05am, sets: 4.04pm
Manchester rises: 8.24am, sets: 4.02pm

○ **Last Quarter**
10 January

HIGH TIDE

London B'ge	(-), (-)
Liverpool	(-), (-)
Greenock	(-), (-)
Dover	(-), (-)

Britain Extremes:
(24 hours to 11pm xxxday)

Warmest: Isles Of Scilly, 9c (48f).
Coldest: Hurn, -6c (21f).
Wettest: Kinlochewe, 0.72ins.
Sunniest: Hurn, 4.3hrs.

Lighting-up times

Belfast	4.11pm-8.45am
Birmingham	4.06pm-8.17am
Bristol	4.14pm-8.15am
Glasgow	3.56pm-8.46am
London	4.04pm-8.05am
Manchester	4.02pm-8.24am
Newcastle	3.51pm-8.30am

Europe forecast

Today

Amsterdam	Sleet	4C/39F
Brussels	Snow	1C/34F
Dublin	Sunny	4C/39F
Frankfurt	Cloudy	2C/36F
Geneva	Sunny	1C/34F
Lisbon	Thunder	16C/61F
Madrid	Cloudy	12C/54F
Paris	Sunny	4C/39F
Rome	Showers	16C/61F

Tomorrow

Amsterdam	Sleet	4C/39F
Brussels	Fair	1C/34F
Dublin	Fair	4C/39F
Frankfurt	Cloudy	2C/36F
Geneva	Sunny	0C/32F
Lisbon	Rain	15C/59F
Madrid	Rain	9C/48F
Paris	Sunny	3C/37F
Rome	Showers	15C/59F

Around the world yesterday

		C	F
Amsterdam	Sleet	3	37
Athens	Sunny	8	46
Barcelona	Fair	9	48
Berlin	Sleet	1	34
Budapest	Cloudy	2	36
Cairo	Cloudy	15	59
Cape Town	Fair	28	82
Casablanca	Cloudy	19	66
Corfu	Rain	12	54
Dublin	Sunny	2	36
Dubrovnik	Shwrs	13	55
Faro	Thndr	16	61
Florence	Shwrs	11	52
Gibraltar	Cloudy	15	59
Guernsey	Shwrs	6	43
Hong Kong	Sunny	16	61
Istanbul	Sunny	6	43
Jersey	Shwrs	7	45
Larnaca	Sunny	14	57
Las Palmas	Shwrs	22	72
Los Angeles	Cloudy	17	63
Luxor	Sunny	21	70
Malaga	Sunny	12	54
Mallorca	Fair	16	61
Malta	Shwrs	16	61
Melbourne	Sunny	22	72
Miami	Sunny	18	64
Moscow	Snow	-12	10
Nairobi	Sunny	25	77
New Delhi	Fair	15	59
New York	-	-3	27
Nice	Sunny	12	54
Nicosia	Sunny	11	52
Perth	Sunny	39	102
Prague	-	1	34
Singapore	Thndr	29	84
Stockholm	Snow	0	32
Sydney	Cloudy	22	72
Tel Aviv	Shwrs	16	61
Tenerife	Shwrs	22	72
Toronto	Cloudy	-10	14
Tunis	Sunny	16	61
Venice	Drizzle	4	39
Vienna	Cloudy	5	41
Warsaw	Sleet	2	36

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'NATIONAL TRAGEDY' OF

Group set up to social care crisis

FROM PAGE ONE

whilst stuck on waiting lists for care." Official figures show that 6,200 people who had sought care during the last financial year then died before any decision was made about whether they would receive it.

Nearly 900,000 adults had their requests for social care turned down in the same period, with many given "information or advice" instead.

The news follows an inquiry by MPs which found that 3.5 million adults are being denied the care they need, "leading to lives led at the bare minimum rather than to their fullest" after successive governments failed to act.

Sir Keir announced on January 3 last year that his administration had launched an independent commission, chaired by Baroness Casey, in order to "grasp the nettle" and fix the broken care system.

Reporting directly to the Prime Minister, the body involves politicians of all parties in an attempt to build a consensus on the creation of a fresh national care service.

Urgency

But only one cross-party meeting has been held, when representatives of Labour, the Tories, Lib Dems, Greens and Reform UK gathered in Whitehall in September.

Dennis Reed, director of older persons' campaign group Silver Voices, said: "Baroness Casey needs to reflect on the urgency of the situation, with thousands dying while they wait in vain for the social care which could have extended their lives."

Delays in the social care system are also adding to hospital waiting lists.

More than 13,000 patients on any given day are stuck in hospital in England even though they are medically fit to leave but cannot be discharged, often because suitable care in the community is unavailable.

Eamonn Donaghy, a spokesperson for campaigners Later Life Ambitions, said: "Reform of the social care system is desperately overdue given millions of older people don't know how they will be cared for in old age. Delayed discharges are not a hospital problem alone – they are a symptom of a social care system that has been allowed to fray for far too long."

Failings in the official care system mean that the burden of providing help often falls on loved ones, according to campaigners.

Helen Walker, chief executive of the charity Carers UK, said: "There are 4.7 million people in England alone providing a staggering £152billion worth of unpaid care every year to family members, friends or neighbours who are older, have a long-term illness or disability.

"Whilst we have been encouraged by initial discussions between Baroness Casey and unpaid carers, a year on there is no time to waste.

"The independent commission must now gather momentum to build consensus to rebuild the social care

Baroness Casey chairs social care commission, set up by PM Sir Keir, below

Helen Morgan MP called on Sir Keir to take action

CORRECTIONS AND COMPLAINTS

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OPINION **14** OBITUARIES **39** PUZZLES **42-43** TRAVEL **45** GARDENING **58** CITY **61**

DEATHS ON WAITING LIST

‘grasp the nettle’ of met once in a year

Activists claim that millions of people do not know how they will be cared for in their old age

EXPRESS VOTE

Is the social care crisis being given enough priority by Sir Keir Starmer?

YES: 0901 133 4440
NO: 0901 133 4441
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Yes text DXYES to 63333
No text DXNO to 63333
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system.” The Department of Health and Social Care said: “We inherited a social care system in desperate need of long-term reform – that’s why we commissioned Baroness Casey to provide an independent roadmap to building a National Care Service for all, with the first steps due this year.

“We are also taking immediate action: making available a funding boost of more than £4billion, money for an extra 15,000 home adaptations for disabled people, the biggest uplift to the Carer’s Allowance threshold since the 1970s and the first ever Fair Pay Agreement to boost recruitment and retention in the workforce.”

But Caroline Abrahams, charity director at Age UK, said: “A year on from the start of the Casey Commission we haven’t seen any tangible improvements to social care as a result.

“But then we were never going to because the commission is not due to complete its work until 2028, with just an interim report due out this year.

“This long drawn-out timescale was set for the commission by the government and reflects a decision on its part to delay the comprehensive social care reform we so badly need until after the next General Election.”

Ms Abrahams added: “As the months go by, that decision is looking more and more short-sighted.” While Simon Bottery, senior fellow at public policy think-tank The King’s Fund, said: “The government took too long to set up the Casey Commission and people who rely on care services cannot afford further delays. There is no guarantee the recommendations it finally delivers will meet their needs, or that the government will implement them.”

OPINION: PAGE 14

COMMENT

DENNIS REED

Director Silver Voices

THE Commission on Social Care, chaired by Baroness Louise Casey, is a waste of space, a misuse of taxpayers’ money, and a barrier to the radical reform needed to solve the social care crisis.

Silver Voices will consult its members on whether we should call for it to be wound up, so that urgent cross-party talks can proceed on possible solutions to the crisis, without waiting for Casey to report in 2028.

Exactly one year ago, in the Express, I described the setting up of the commission as a cop-out by the Labour government, as part of a deliberate plan to kick the whole issue into the political long grass.

However, I had hoped that Baroness Casey would be willing to accelerate the timetable and consider early radical changes to address the problems.

I have tried to engage with the commission’s team of civil servants throughout 2025 to emphasise the need for urgent action, to no avail. Baroness Casey has refused to meet me.

Sword

It is clear that she, despite her reputation for independence, has decided to do the government’s bidding. Her interim report, due later this year, is unlikely to do more than suggest a few tweaks to the existing system of funding. Her inquiry is proceeding at a funereal pace, with only one token meeting with the other political parties and just a handful of public events.

She appears uninterested in defining what Labour’s promised “national care service” means in practice. This is a phantom commission going through the motions on behalf of the government.

This commission was never needed, with 25 similar inquiries having taken place since 1997, with multiple public consultations.

We just need political direction and ambition, which Labour is failing to provide.

Baroness Casey needs to reflect on the urgency of the situation, with thousands dying while they wait in vain for the social care which could have extended their lives, and fall on her sword – or her reputation will be in tatters.

Message to our readers from Express Editor Geoff Maynard

Dear Express Readers,

Today I am writing to apologise for the paper’s cover price increase this morning. It is a testing time for the publishing industry, with the cost of producing and distributing newspapers increasing as circulation sadly declines.

You, our loyal readers, are well aware of the cost-of-living pressures we all face due to global economic uncertainty, and I am sorry that you are being asked to pay a bit more again for your favourite newspaper.

What I can promise you is an excellent product that is available seven days a week, and I hope it will continue to earn your loyalty. We are still cheaper than a cup of coffee, and I can assure you a hell of a lot more effort goes into producing it.

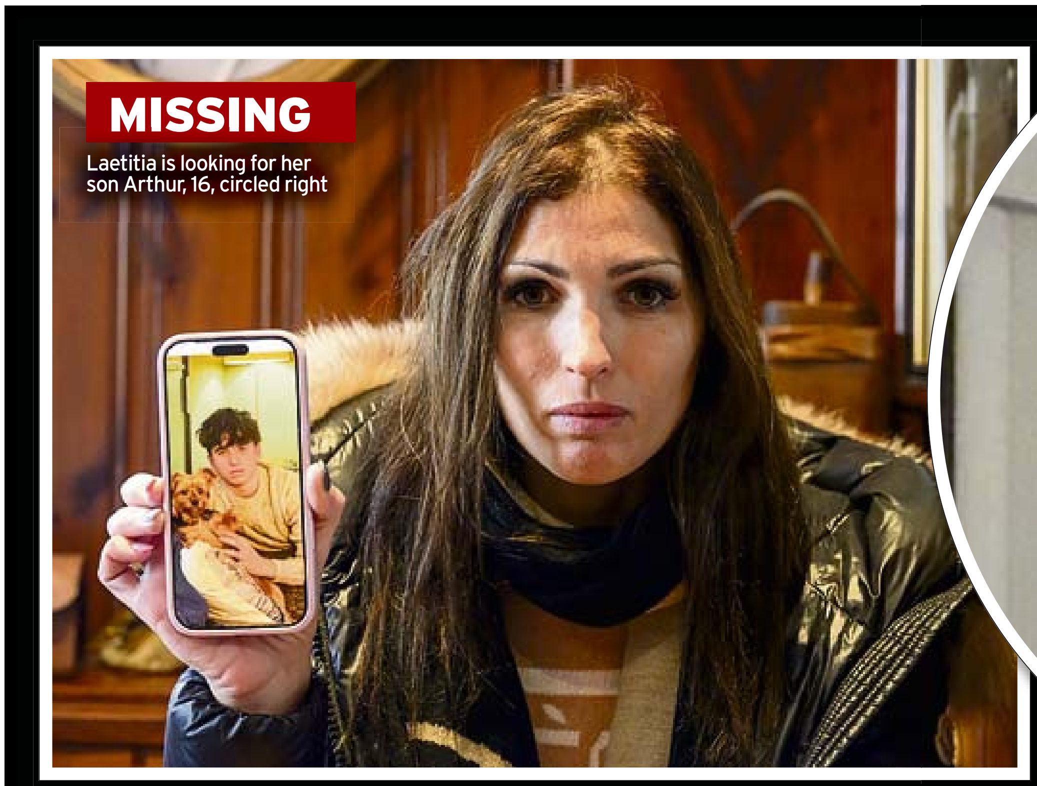
Our columns are packed full of great content with amazing writers like Carole Malone, Esther McVey, Leo McKinstry, Vanessa Feltz, Richard and Judy, Nick Ferrari, Virginia Blackburn, JJ Anisiobi, Emily Ferguson, Esther Krakue, Mike Ward, Sam Lister, Katie Elliott, Frances Millar and Mieka Smiles. Our tremendously hard-working journalists strive day in day out to produce the best news, features, sport and picture stories to keep you informed and entertained. We are also packed full of great puzzling content as we know you love a good brain teaser.

I hope you will stick with Britain’s best campaigning newspaper and the newspaper that constantly shouts about the issues that matter, whether it is protecting the pensions triple lock, calling for better migration controls, fighting the high tax burden, restoring the winter fuel allowance, getting the farming inheritance tax scaled back or fighting for choice on assisted dying.

This is a newspaper that will continue to raise awareness about the issues that matter to our readers.

Happy New Year to you all, and many thanks for your loyalty.

Geoff, Express Editor
geoff.maynard@express.co.uk



MISSING

Laetitia is looking for her son Arthur, 16, circled right

Agony of sparkler inferno parents

Desperate wait after club tragedy kills at least 40, with 80 critically ill

BY **PATRICK HILL** in Crans-Montana, Switzerland
PICTURES: **TIM MERRY**

LIKE millions of other parents, Laetitia Brodard-Sitre had a "happy New Year" text from her son just after midnight.

Since then, she has heard nothing.

Fighting back tears at the site of the horrific nightclub blaze which killed at least 40 people, she said: "It's an unbearable wait."

Laetitia, 42, mum to Arthur, 16, added: "I won't stop searching. I won't give up."

Parents across Europe found themselves in the same dire situation yesterday, as police officers continued to recover bodies from the ruins of the nightclub after the blaze, which broke out at about 1.30am.

Pictures emerged last night of the moment sparklers ignited the ceiling of Le Constellation bar in the Swiss ski resort of Crans-Montana.

Other family members of the missing, including relatives of Diana, 14, and Alicia Gonset, 15, yesterday posted photos and details of their loved ones on social media.

They are thought to have been in the bar with another missing girl, British-educated Charlotte Niddam, said to be 15 and a former pupil of Emmanuel College, Watford, North London, close to where she lived with her French-born parents for several years before moving to Switzerland.

Fireball

Melissa Rey also appealed for information about her sister Caroline, who went missing with two friends, Mariam Essouri and Emilie Pralong, 22, whose family wrote: "Emilie Pralong, where are you? We love you."

The family of 15-year-old Alice Kallergis, including her brother Romain who claimed he saw kids aged between 13 and 15 in the bar, also made a heartbreaking appeal.

And the families of young girls Zelie Fournier and Dalia Benkirane were last night searching for their whereabouts with the loved ones of another young woman, Noemie Dabin, who reportedly went missing after going to the bar after work.

The mum of 16-year-old Giovanni Tamburi, from Bologna, launched an appeal to find her son, saying: "We're calling all the hospitals, but nobody knows anything… the patients are in terrible condition."

The family of 16-year-old Italian schoolboy Achille Barosi also appealed for information, as did pals of Pablo Pero, who turned 16 last month, Nathan Duboux, Not Trevnot and Joaquim Van Thuyne.

But Swiss officials have said it could take days before they are able to identify and name all the victims of the tragedy in the upmarket ski resort, which is around two hours' drive from Geneva.

They yesterday announced 119 people are being treated in hospital, including 80 who remained in a critical condition.

Among the injured are 71 Swiss nationals, 14 French, 11 Italian, four Serbs, a Bosnian, Luxembourger, Belgian, Pole and Portuguese. The nationality of 14 others remains unknown.

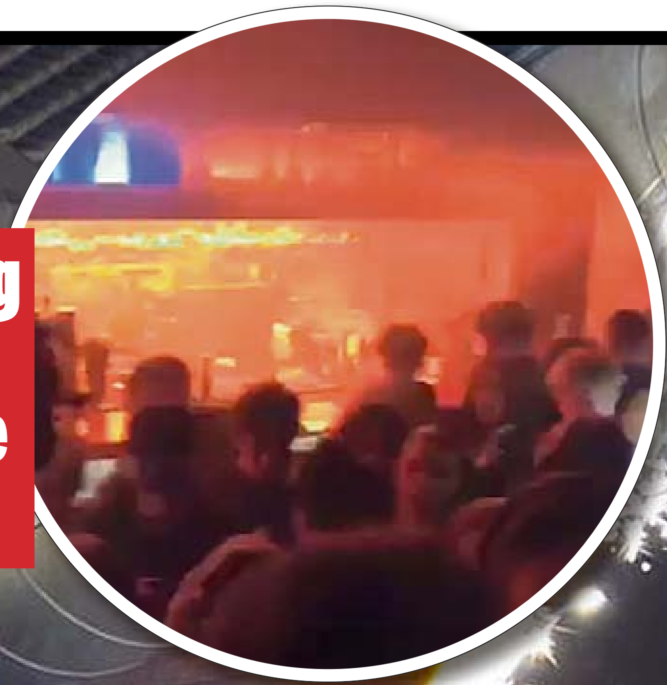
French student Ferdinand Du Beaudiez, 19, was in the bar with six loved ones, including his brother, who remains in a coma. Returning to the scene yesterday, he said: "I saw someone order these champagne bottles and I saw the waitresses take the bottles on their shoulders. The fire spread on the whole roof. I threw some water, but it didn't help anything.

"At this moment I suppose someone opened the front door. This led to lots of air getting inside, which provided some air to the fire. And the fire turned into a fireball."

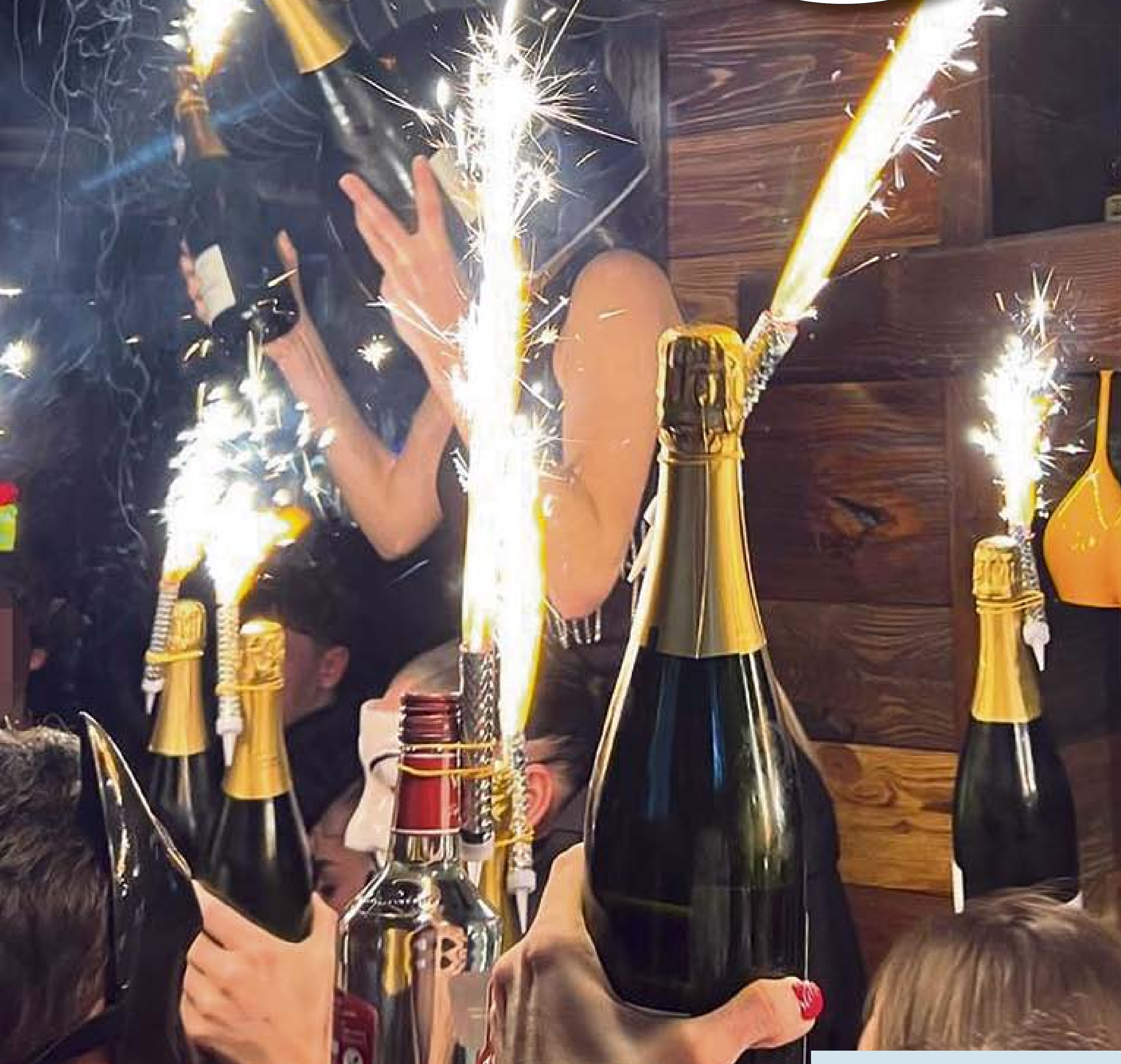
Ferdinand, who is from Paris and studying finance and economics at Munich University, said: "I couldn't find anyone so I went back inside. I found someone… I hope he was just

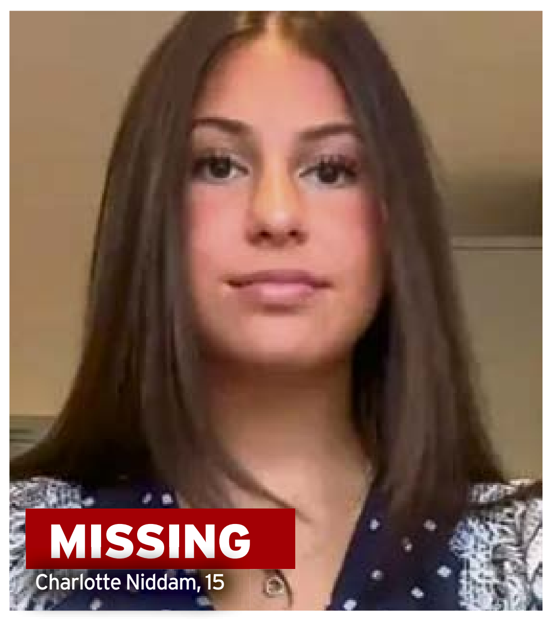
MISSING

Émilie Pralong, 22



Terrifying moment the blaze ignited





MISSING

Charlotte Niddam, 15

DEAD

Golfer Emanuele, 16, pictured with Rory McIlroy

MISSING

Alicia and Diana Gonset, aged 15 and 14

unconscious. I grabbed him and I took him out. I found someone laying in the stairs, completely burned. Clothes were burned. I couldn't recognise if it was a woman or a man. It was terrifying. It felt like a war scene."

A criminal probe has been launched. Attorney general for the Valais canton, Beatrice Pilloud, said the bar's owners, French couple Jacques and Jessica Moretti, have been interviewed, but not under caution. She added: "We will be able to investigate whether any individuals bear criminal liability. And if this is the case, all the investigations will be opened for homicide by negligence and injuries by negligence."

The Pope sent a message of support as local officials yesterday announced a memorial will be held in the resort on January 9.

Among the first of the victims to be named was Italian golfer Emanuele Galeppini, 16. The Italian Golf Federation said he "embodied passion and authentic values".

'Fire skirted trapped lad who sat holding crucifix'

Anguished Laetitia got out but friends are still missing

A YOUNGSTER trapped inside the bar survived after clutching a crucifix as flames spread around him.

Laetitia Place, 17, who also escaped, said her friend saw his exits blocked so sat down, holding the cross.

She revealed: "He survived, thankfully. The fire just avoided him, the fire just didn't touch him.

"I just want to thank the Lord for saving me, and I just want to ask him to save my friends who are missing.

"I don't want to lose more people, because I've already lost people and we're still looking."

Education expert Helen Hayes

Labour MP attacks bid to end kids' SEND plans

BY **JONATHAN WALKER**

A SENIOR Labour MP has urged her party to scrap plans to limit special educational needs support.

Helen Hayes, who chairs the Commons education committee, said: "A primary challenge for the government is the urgent need to rebuild the trust and confidence of parents and carers, which is currently broken. Our assessment is that any erosion of current rights and entitlements will simply undermine confidence further. The government should not therefore go down this route."

Ministers have already delayed announcing that fewer children will receive education, health and care plans – giving them a legal right to council support – following a backlash.

Anxiety

But the policy is set to be confirmed early this year, in a bid to cut the soaring cost of help for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, SEND.

Government sources say children will receive appropriate support automatically without requiring a plan.

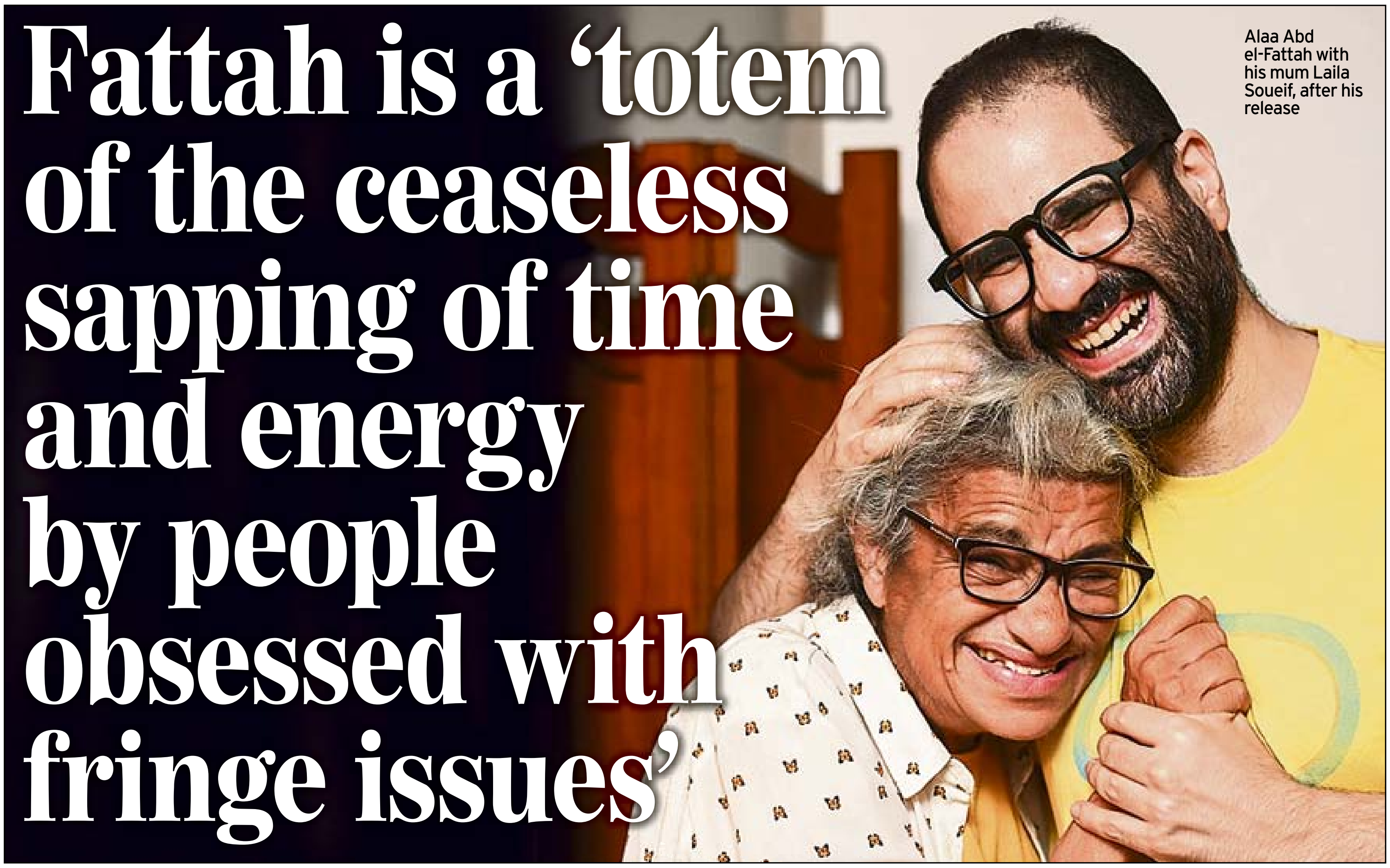
But Ms Hayes said parents and carers "already live with a huge level of anxiety about the support their children need".

Appeals by parents attempting to obtain help for their child hit a record high last year, with 25,000 cases going to a tribunal.

The majority were about the content of education, health and care plans. Nearly a quarter were appealing a refusal to grant a plan.

More than one in 20 pupils has a plan, and local authorities are increasingly forced to buy services from independent education providers to meet demand. The County Councils Network says the system faces "total collapse" in four years.

Fattah is a 'totem of the ceaseless sapping of time and energy by people obsessed with fringe issues'



Alaa Abd el-Fattah with his mum Laila Soueif, after his release

BY **JONATHAN WALKER**
Whitehall Editor

ONE of Sir Keir Starmer's former top advisers has mocked the Prime Minister over the release of Egyptian activist Alaa Abd El-Fattah.

Paul Ovenden, who served as Sir Keir Starmer's director of strategy in No10 until September, said the case was "a running joke" in Whitehall.

Sir Keir said this week that bringing the activist to the UK "has been a top priority for my government since we came to office".

But Mr Ovenden said: "His designation as a 'high priority' for the government came as a surprise to me – because until recently I was in a position of influence over government priorities."

Mr Abd El-Fattah arrived in London on Boxing Day after the British government negotiated his release from custody in Egypt.

Sir Keir said at the time: "I am delighted that Alaa Abd El-Fattah is back in the UK." But it emerged Mr Abd El-Fattah had made a series of comments calling for the killing of police and Zionists, describing British people as dogs and monkeys, and declaring: "I'm a racist, I don't like white people." He also urged rioters to burn down Downing Street.

Paul Ovenden was director of strategy for Sir Keir Starmer

Mr Ovenden, who was also Labour's director of communications when the party was in opposition, said: "What I knew of his plight during my time in government was largely down to his status as a cause celebre beloved of Whitehall's sturdy, clean-shirted diplomats and their scurrying auxiliaries.

"They mentioned him with such regularity that it became a running joke among my colleagues: a totem of the ceaseless sapping of time and energy by people obsessed with fringe issues." He said the fixation with Mr Abd El-Fattah at Whitehall showed how government was influenced by "the celebrity letter-writing campaign and the activist lawyers."

Mr Ovenden said: "Once you start noticing it, you see it everywhere: in the democratic powers handed to arm's-length bodies or the many small government departments too powerless or captured to resist lobbying."

False

Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper has said due diligence in Mr Abd El-Fattah's case was "completely inadequate" and has ordered a review to ensure lessons are learned.

The activist was granted UK citizenship in December 2021 under former Conservative prime minister Boris Johnson, reportedly through his British-born mother.

His imprisonment for charges of spreading false news was branded a breach of international law by UN investigators and he was pardoned by Egyptian president Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi in September after years of lobbying by Tory and Labour governments.

'Dirty tricks plot' to stop PM Farage

BY **JONATHAN WALKER**

NIGEL Farage's opponents are planning a dirty tricks campaign in a desperate bid to prevent him becoming PM, a Whitehall insider warned.

Dominic Cummings, who was Boris Johnson's right-hand man in No10, said: "They'll leak medical records, they'll leak tax records. They'll bug his phone and leak that. They'll do anything that they need to."

Mr Cummings claimed Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's allies and Whitehall officials are determined to prevent Reform UK winning power – and fear he could be a British Donald Trump.

He told the Spectator podcast: "The people around Starmer and all through the upper echelons of Whitehall are looking at Trump, they're looking across Europe, and they're saying to themselves, 'The lesson is to strike early and strike hard and not let these people in'."

He said Mr Farage's opponents were telling themselves: "We should never have let Vote Leave win the referendum on Brexit. That was the beginning of the disaster for us. We can't make this mistake again.

"Let's smash Farage and make sure that he doesn't win it by fair means and foul."

Starmer 'must act on Reform threat'

BY **DAVID WILLIAMSON**
Chief Political Commentator

PANIC at the popularity of Reform UK is laid bare in a warning from a New Labour strategist who claims Sir Keir Starmer's party lacks a plan and is "caught in the headlights".

Sir Chris Powell, who advised Labour before Tony Blair's 1997 landslide win, warns there is no plan to deal with the "existential threat" posed by Nigel Farage's party which has a double-digit lead over rivals in Politico's poll of polls.

Sounding the alarm in The Guardian, he said: "We are at a very dangerous moment. We simply cannot afford to allow Nigel Farage's Reform UK to have a free run, and become established and entrenched as a credible potential government.

Sir Chris Powell sounds alarm

"The longer they go unchallenged, the more unthreatening and risk-free they will seem to voters. Just hoping that Reform and Farage implode, or that the right-wing vote will somehow fracture, is potentially suicidal for our freedom and democracy." Politico says Reform is backed by 29% of voters, with the Tories on 18%, Labour and the Greens on 16% and the Lib Dems 13%.

Pressing for "no-holds-barred thinking", Sir Chris said Sir Keir "needs to fundamentally change the way he approaches voters and his way of interacting", adding: "Voters are fed up, think nothing works - and some are simply angry and feel ignored."

He called it "a textbook case of an establishment party caught in the headlights as its populist opponent expertly reacts to voter pain".

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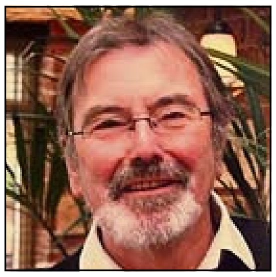


Tom Wallace died on Monday

Pair charged on suspected 'hit and run' death of OAP

BY **GEORGE LITHGOW**

TWO men have appeared in court after a great-grandad was killed in a suspected "hit-and-run" car crash.

Police believe retired dentist Tom Wallace, 89, "had been carried by the car" almost a mile from where he is thought to have been hit.

Two Albanians appeared at Medway magistrates court yesterday over the tragedy in Gillingham, Kent, on Monday.

Albert Matraxhiu, 28, of Edgware, North London, has been charged with death by dangerous driving, intention to pervert the course of justice, failure to stop after an accident and failure to report an accident.

Erald Paci, 29, of Chatham, Kent, has been charged with perverting the course of justice.

They will reappear at Maidstone crown court on January 30. Mr Wallace's family said: "He was a Samaritan for years, raised money for the NSPCC and did several European cycling tours to raise funds for Marie Curie. He deserved a better end to his life."

Man, 51, dies after swim

BY **BEN MITCHELL**

A MAN has died after getting into difficulty in the sea at Brighton on New Year's Day, police have confirmed.

Sussex Police said they were alerted at 10.35am after the swimmer, 51, was recovered from the water west of the Palace Pier.

The force said they are not treating his death as suspicious and have informed the next of kin.

It comes after the disappearance of Matthew Upham, 63, and another man during a Christmas Day swim in Devon.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution said: "We are urging anyone entering the water to be aware of the dangers – check sea conditions."

Grease is the word...it may cause offence!

Olivia Newton-John and John Travolta in the iconic 1978 movie Grease

ITV bosses put trigger warning on hit teen film

BY **AARON NEWBURY**

BOSSES at ITV have placed a trigger warning on family favourite musical Grease for scenes of teenage misbehaviour, it has been reported.

The classic 1978 film, which stars John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John, has been targeted by TV executives for trivialising issues such as a consent for sexual encounters.

Grease sees the main characters Danny and Sandy getting back together at high school after a summer fling. The late Newton-John plays an Australian student on transfer to a US school.

The movie features scenes that reportedly caused ITV to put on the warning: "With mild language and teenage misbehaviour."

These include a faulty contraceptive and interactions between characters which ridicule virginity.

The 1950s-set film remains hugely popular and spawned a box-office hit musical. It is also apparently in trouble for the song Greased Lightnin', which is about a car but with lyrics interpreted as "vulgar".

Meanwhile, the character Rizzo, who was played by Stockard Channing, is said to be "slut-shamed" when she fears she may have become pregnant. The film is currently available on the online streaming service ITVX.

Skirt

It is the latest movie in recent days to be reassessed, after iconic musical West Side Story was reclassified from a parental guidance (PG) film to a 12.

This followed a decision by the British Board of Film Classification which said it identified themes such as sexism and transphobia that could trigger young viewers.

One character is told to "go wear a skirt". The 1961 adaptation of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet – with New York gangs the Sharks and Jets replacing the Montagues and Capulets – also features characters who smoke and drink. One is stabbed and another is shot.

The BBFC also hit the recent big-screen sequel to Wicked with a warning, including cautioning viewers that it features characters that are witches who "cast magical spells on one another".

The BBFC warned viewers of the Wizard of Oz spin-off that "occasional threatening scenes include people caught by falling debris in a cyclone and fantastical creatures rampaging through a crowd". In the Wizard of Oz, which is based on the 1900 novel by L Frank Baum, Dorothy is transported from her Kansas home to Oz via a tornado.

The BBFC updates its classification guidelines every four or five years after public consultation.

OPINION: PAGE 14

Trump threatens Iran over demo victims

Street riots against the dictatorship

BY **MATT NIXSON**

DONALD Trump has warned that the US is "locked and loaded" and ready to intervene if the Iranian regime kills any more peaceful protesters.

At least eight people are reported to have been killed in Iran after almost a week of mass protests sparked by worsening economic conditions.

The US President wrote yesterday: "If Iran shoots and violently kills peaceful protesters, which is their custom, the United States of America will come to their rescue. We are locked and loaded and ready to go." Many of the Iranians who took to the streets are calling for the fall of Iran's Supreme Leader Seyyed Ali Khamenei, 86, and some want a return to the monarchy.

Footage showed running battles between protesters and security forces.

Khamenei adviser Ali Larijani said: "Trump should know US interference in this internal matter would mean destabilising the entire region and destroying America's interests."

Men In Black star ‘groomed’ male musician

Will Smith, 57, has denied all the allegations

Will Smith sued for sexual harassment by tour violinist

BY **LUCY NEEDHAM**

WILL Smith is being sued by an America’s Got Talent star who claims he was fired for reporting sexual harassment.

Brian King Joseph is pursuing the actor and his company Treyball Studios Management for wrongful termination and retaliation in a suit filed in California’s superior court.

He alleges he was subjected to a “traumatic series of events” while working on the film star and singer’s 2025 tour Based On A True Story, before getting fired for complaining. The Men In Black actor, 57, allegedly told the violinist: “You and I have such a special connection that I don’t have with anyone else.”

The former America’s Got Talent finalist claimed he was left a disturbing message at his Las Vegas hotel after a break-in.

He alleged the intruder left evidence of a “sexual threat of violence” including “a bottle of HIV medication with another individual’s name, an earring, and hospital discharge paperwork” that belonged to someone else. A note signed with a heart and the name Stone F left with the items read: “Brian, I’ll be back... just us.”

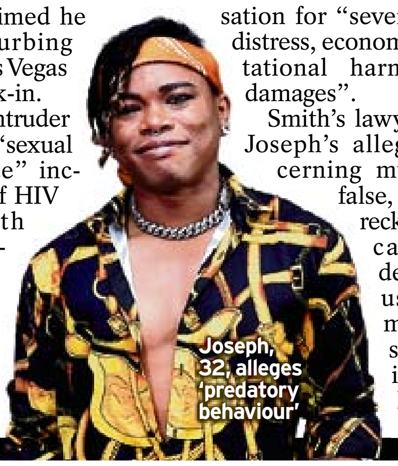
The lawsuit claimed Smith had been “deliberately grooming and priming Mr Joseph for further sexual exploitation”.

It alleged: “The circumstances of the hotel intrusion all point to a pattern of predatory behaviour rather than an isolated incident.”

After finding someone had been in his room, the musician said he reported it to hotel staff, police and Smith’s management, but he alleged one of the team told him he would be sacked.

Brian, 32, claimed he suffered “PTSD” and wants compensation for “severe emotional distress, economic loss, reputational harm, and other damages”.

Smith’s lawyer said: “Mr Joseph’s allegations concerning my client are false, baseless and reckless. They are categorically denied. We will use all legal means to ensure the truth is brought to light.”



Joseph, 32, alleges ‘predatory behaviour’

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Netty feared that she was too loud

‘If I knew what was coming, I probably would have stayed a little bit quieter!’

Netty is first player to be murdered

BY **NICOLA METHVEN**

NURSERY teacher Netty wept when she discovered she was the first player to be murdered on The Traitors as a new series kicked off in ruthless herd-mentality style.

Child liaison officer Judy notched up a staggering 16 votes as she became the first contestant to be banished, and the first ever on the BBC show to receive so many votes.

On finding out she had been killed, Netty, 42, said tearfully: “Oh no! I’m so gutted, I think I’d have been a very good Faithful. Maybe I was too loud.”

The single mum said she would have done better if she had piped down.

“Originally, I said I’ll observe and see what’s going on, but I absolutely did not stick to it,” she sighed, speaking after her departure. “I was like, ‘What do you think?’ to everyone and, ‘This is what I think’. That’s what I felt like I needed to do. If I knew what was coming, I probably would have stayed a little bit quieter. But I don’t know if that would have stopped me being on that short list of names anyway.”

Netty did not blame her murder on anything to do with knowing Ross, an old friend she had not seen for many years.

“I think in the first instant, because it has been so long since I’d seen him, I don’t think I even remembered his name,” she laughed.

“For me it was an added bonus. I know he thought, ‘Oh no, this is not going to be good for the game’, but I just thought, ‘This is amazing’. The madness of seeing Ross was mind-blowing. I just had no idea, and then I was overthinking that.”

After being banished at the round table Judy, 60, said she would not have done anything differently.

“I’d have loved to have stayed longer. I didn’t have a strategy,” she said.

“I thought there’s no point in changing myself. I’m just going to play the game the best I can play it and enjoy it and have some fun, and that’s what I did.”

Most of the group looked horrified after getting it so wrong. Host Claudia Winkleman told them: “You banished an innocent Faithful, she was just being herself. What a striking win for the Traitors.”

Judy is backing her daughter Roxy, 32, to win, adding: “I’m willing her on, she’s got it in her to go all the way.”

Roxy was furious to see her mum cast out from the show, saying that if Sam, who had led the charge, was a Faithful, then he had “done the Traitors a favour tonight”.

She pledged: “Mum’s game might be over, it was cut short, but mine is just starting and it’s going to spur me on.”

Last night, the Secret Traitor – a fourth traitor whose identity has not even been revealed to viewers –produced an all-male murder shortlist.

In tonight’s third episode, either Ben, Reece or Maz will be bumped off, leading the Traitors to believe the Secret Traitor must be female.

THE TRAITORS

Judy reacts to being the first to be banished from the new series

Contestants react to learning they have voted off a Faithful en masse

‘Sunshine Saturday’ kicks off predicted rise in package hols

BY **NEIL LANCEFIELD**

PACKAGE holiday bookings are expected to increase by 5% this year, according to the Civil Aviation Authority.

The regulator, which administers the Atol travel financial protection scheme, also forecast that 200,000 more holidaymakers will book trips in January compared with the 4.3 million who did so during the same month in 2025.

Today – the first Saturday in January – is called Sunshine Saturday by the sector, as it is one of the busiest days of the year for bookings.

Firms expect it to kickstart a 5% increase in demand for trips in the year to the end of September, compared with the previous 12 months.

However Rory Boland, editor of magazine Which? Travel, urged people not to “feel pressured into booking in a hurry” this weekend despite it being “advertised as a prime time to grab a holiday bargain”.

He said: “Consider your options and shop around to make sure you’re getting the right holiday for you, at the right price. If you are flexible on destination, there are offers throughout the year.”

Protection

British Airways Holidays revealed that the British overseas territory of Bermuda, in the North Atlantic, is its fastest growing destination for holiday searches online.

There was a 38% increase in searches for 2026 Bermuda trips between January 1 and November 9 2025, compared with the same period in 2024 for travel last year.

Other destinations also seeing strong interest include the Greek island of Crete (up 18%) and Central American nation Costa Rica (up 15%).

Selina Chadha, group director for consumers and markets at the CAA, said it is important to check package holidays for Atol protection.

She said: “Whether you’re searching for a summer or winter break, you’ll have peace of mind that you won’t lose money if your travel company collapses.”

All holidays sold in the UK as a package – typically flights and accommodation together – are required to be protected by Atol. The scheme provides support when a tour operator goes out of business.

WINTER WARMERS: PAGES 32 & 33

Turkish resort of Antalya offers a perfect mix of beach, sun and history

Brits still sweet on Turkish delight Antalya

BY **FRANCES MILLAR**

ANTALYA will be the top holiday spot for Britons this year, according to industry projections.

The Turkish resort city on the Mediterranean coast topped the rankings last year and is expected to remain a firm favourite thanks to its strong value for money, reliable sunshine, beaches, history, culture and good food.

Research by experts On The Beach shows demand for overseas breaks remains strong despite fears over the economy, with 43% of Brits planning to book this month or in February.

Egypt has emerged as one of the fastest-rising destinations, with Hurghada and Sharm El Sheikh becoming more popular for guaranteed sunshine.

Tunisia is also being tipped as a breakout destination and the Canary Islands and mainland Spain remain firm favourites too.

For budget-minded travellers, timing is key. June has once again been identified as the cheapest summer month to travel.

Zoe Harris, at On the Beach, said: “Even in a challenging economic climate, holidays remain one of the last things Brits are willing to cut back on.”

BAG A BARGAIN

Edge Sharm El Sheikh Sea Beach

SEVEN nights all inclusive at the HSM Canarios Park on Majorca including flights from London Southend on Saturday, June 6, costs just £335pp from On the Beach.

The same travel agent is also offering a seven-night all-inclusive stay at Egypt’s Edge Sharm El Sheikh – Sea Beach. Flights from London Luton on Wednesday May 6 – all for £370pp.

Or go all inclusive, again for seven nights, at the Atlantica Akteon in Paphos, Cyprus including flights from Manchester, on Friday, May 8, for £640pp – another from On the Beach.

The firm also has a seven-night, all-inclusive stay at the Telatiye Resort Hotel in Antalya, Turkey, including flights departing London Gatwick on Tuesday May 5, for £335pp.

If you fancy South Africa, Hays Travel offers a seven-night all-inclusive safari at Mabula Game Lodge in Waterberg, including flights – dates from June 2026 to December 2028 – costing from £3,162pp.

Should cruising float your boat, a 10-night Royal Caribbean voyage to Alaska from Seattle, with flights, from Sept 2026 is £2,000pp from Hays Travel.

While a seven-night all-inclusive stay at Sunscape Coco Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, with flights from Gatwick on Saturday May 9, starts at £1,340pp again from Hays.

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Boxer Anthony Joshua

AJ driver is charged for crash that killed two

BY **NEWS REPORTER**

ANTHONY Joshua's driver has been charged over the crash that injured the boxer and killed two of his team in Nigeria on Monday.

Kayode Adeniyi, 46, was accused of causing death by dangerous driving, reckless and negligent driving, driving without due care, and driving without a valid driver's licence.

He was granted bail for £2,578 at the Sagamu Magistrates' Court and will reappear in court on January 20.

Joshua had swapped seats with one of his friends just before the tragedy which killed Sina Ghami and Latif Ayodele, both 36.

Victoria and Tommy in 2017

Hollywood star Jones' daughter is found dead

BY **BRADLEY JOLLY**

VICTORIA Jones, the actress daughter of Oscar winner Tommy Lee Jones, has been found dead at an upscale hotel.

The 34-year-old, who appeared with her dad in Men In Black II, was discovered unresponsive in a corridor at the Fairmont, San Francisco, early on New Year's Day.

Emergency services tried to resuscitate her but she was pronounced dead at the scene.

It is not yet known how Victoria died or whether she was a hotel guest.

She was the second daughter of The Fugitive and Under Siege actor Jones, 79, and second wife Kimberlea Cloughley, to whom he was married from 1981 to 1996.

Dec's new next door neighbour is... Dec!

Donnelly buys THIRD house in same street

Declan Donnelly and his wife Ali

BY **TOM BRYANT**

DECLAN Donnelly is toasting his and Ant McPartlin's new £30million ITV contract by splashing out on his THIRD house on the same street.

Dec already has a £7m mansion in West London, as well as the house next door that he snapped up three years ago for £2.25m.

He has now bought his third home, next door to the second one and submitted planning applications to develop it. It is not known how much he paid but current houses are being sold for £2.5m on that street.

Ant also used to live a few doors down from Dec on the same road before his divorce from first wife Lisa.

He moved out of the area, and now lives in a £6m home in South West London with new wife Anne-Marie. The couple are now said to be house-hunting.

Details of Dec's latest buy emerged after plans were submitted to the local council by his wife Ali to add a side extension and install a new gate.

Neighbours were reportedly delighted when Dec bought the £2.25m property as it was run down and an eyesore.

The latest home will also be spruced up. It is made up of two flats, and it is not known what Dec plans to do with the property or if he intends to sell it on.

Dec, 50, bought his original seven-bedroom pile in 2006 for £1.9m. It is now worth more than three times that after he added a cinema, swimming pool, steam room and poolside kitchen.

He lives there with his wife Ali and children Isla and Jack. The new purchase is thought to have been sealed in the last two months as Ant and Dec negotiated their three-year ITV deal. It is worth £5m a year to each of them and takes the duo through to the end of 2028, 30 years after the Geordies joined ITV to host kids' show SM:TV.

The pair have a bumper year lined up with a new series of Ant & Dec's Limitless Win, Britain's Got Talent, I'm A Celebrity South Africa, which returns three years after its first run, and I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here!

ITV revealed this week how I'm a Celeb's first episode got an audience of 11.2 million.

Dec said last week: "We are so lucky to work on some of the biggest and best TV shows and we are proud of what we have achieved together with ITV over the years."

He added: "We're excited for the future and are looking forward to making more great entertainment together".

Kevin Lygo, managing director for media and entertainment at ITV, said he was delighted to snap up the duo.

He said: "Ant and Dec's impact upon the world of live entertainment is unrivalled, with their triumphant partnership reigning supreme for over three decades.

"This new three-year working relationship marks an exciting new chapter with ITV, which I have no doubt will be full of yet more unmissable entertainment."

Ant and Dec shared a flat when they moved to London as teenagers. They also previously bought neighbouring holiday homes in the Algarve.

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Amanda Holden on Christmas Special of Ant and Dec's Limitless Win

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No one should be dying for a social care decision

IT IS a national scandal that more than 6,000 people have died waiting for a care decision. These were people who asked for help when they needed it most but were forced to wait so long for an answer that they passed away before it came.

The shocking state of our social care service leaves millions of adults unable to live their lives to the fullest.

It also places a huge burden on their family members who pick up the slack as unpaid carers.

We all know that change is needed but successive governments have ignored the issue.

A plan to fix social care is required now. Unfortunately, there is no sign of it coming.

Sir Keir Starmer and his government colleagues definitely had the right idea when they launched a cross-party commission to consider reforms.

It makes sense to win agreement across political divides – to ensure there is continuity in policy when a new government comes into power.

Change is also likely to be expensive and it's possible that Sir Keir felt controversial spending decisions would be easier to sell to the public if other parties were on board.

But the high-profile launch of his commission, exactly 12 months ago, has been followed by virtual silence.

We all know that change will take time – but this makes it even more important to get it started.

Unfortunately, this present government, paralysed by division and a lack of leadership at the top, is incapable of making the big decisions the nation needs.

It's Grease frightenin'...

PROMISES that movie musical Grease contains scenes of "teenage misbehaviour" will only encourage younger audiences to take a look.

They may be disappointed. While the 1978 film does contain references to sex, they are fairly tame by today's standards.

Even so, television executives appear convinced that viewers require a warning before being exposed to Grease – which viewers of multiple generations have watched without complaint – West Side Story or even the musical fantasy Wicked.

They fear that some of the opinions expressed in these movies will appear shocking.

But audiences understand perfectly well that they are watching fictional characters who are not necessarily paragons of virtue.

Rather than protecting viewers, we suspect TV bosses are trying to shield themselves from potential criticism.

Across the world, people are growing increasingly sick of this woke nonsense.

2026 must be the year that it ends.

School's cool for all

WELL done to all the mums and dads out there! You have survived Christmas, and the children will be going back to school any day now.

They might even get to enjoy some snow in the meantime.

But make sure they wrap up warm – we're set for a very chilly start to the new term.

---

150 years of the telephone has been quite enough

Few people now make actual telephone calls and we are much the better for it

James Innes-Smith
Guest Columnist

WHEN did you last receive a phone call from someone you actually wanted to speak to? I can't remember when a friend last rang "for a chat". As a consequence, my voicemail is full of messages, not from old acquaintances but from scammers and annoying utility companies begging me to switch to a smart meter – when will they get the message?

As we march ever deeper into the digital age where even texts and emails will be supplanted by some new form of AI communication, I for one will be glad to see the back of the old "dog and bone". This March 10 marks 150 years since Graham Bell made the first successful, intelligible call, famously telling his assistant: "Mr Watson, come here – I want to see you."

Ironic then that at a time when phones have never been more ubiquitous we are using them less and less; even when we do make the occasional call, few of us hold the actual device to our ear, preferring to communicate via an earpiece to avoid the risk of contracting a brain tumour!

But phone-related cancer isn't our only concern.

A recent study by Trinity College London of more than 1,500 people aged between 16 and 29 found that 30% of them feel anxious using the blower – a condition known as "telephobia". Imagine if these poor souls still had to rely on landlines where the recipient has no idea who is on the other end until they pick up.

THESE days, of course, mobiles are chiefly used for text messaging and scrolling. Like many heavy users, my aching neck and shoulders are testament to the inordinate amount of time spent hunched over my screen, head bowed, fingers tapping furiously. It's an addiction seemingly without a cure as millions of us are now discovering to our detriment.

Since abandoning my trusty old landline a few years back, I've become even less inclined to speak on the phone unless absolutely necessary.

If I don't recognise a number, I simply ignore it, assuming the worst. That said, my device is usually on silent mode, thereby removing any sense of guilt about not picking up.

Up until his death earlier this year, the only person I knew who still relied on a landline was my 96-year-old father. Like many older people he found mobiles baffling and much preferred the familiarity of physical buttons and a chunky receiver. Meanwhile his abandoned smartphone remained permanently out of reach, hidden under a pile of magazines.

As with most individuals born before the war, my father was a trusting soul; unfortunately this made him a prime target for scammers. Being housebound meant he relied on his landline for almost everything including vital hospital appointments. The phone socket even connected his panic button to emergency services.

Sadly, towards the end of his life my father became increasingly wary about answering his landline due to the sheer number of criminals trying to rip him off. Thankfully he never fell for their inevitable demands to hand over bank details.

As someone who enjoyed a lark he would sometimes engage with scammers, explaining that he was a member of the Royal Family and would be asking His Majesty's government to investigate the call. On other occasions, he would pretend to go along with the scam, eventually yelling "bugger off" when the time came to divulge his current account details.

Sadly, until phone companies come up with an effective way to block this insidious criminality, scammers will continue to target the most vulnerable.

It seems unlikely, however, that companies will invest in a dying technology used almost exclusively by the elderly and infirm.

MY OWN aversion to calls is mostly down to privacy. I used to be excited when the phone rang, but these days I find the shrill ring tone not only annoying but deeply impertinent.

Imagine if some random person broke into your home and demanded your full attention. You'd probably call the police. I find phone calls equally intrusive. No wonder I go into a state of high alert whenever my phone explodes into life.

Like all those other telephobia snowflakes, I yearn to be left in peace.

Texting and email offer concise, commitment-free communication, so why endure long-winded phone conversations weighed down with boring small talk – another cause of anxiety, according to 38% of young people. Unless something requires an actual conversation, just send me a message and I might even reply.

'Like all telephobia snowflakes, I yearn to be left in peace'

Lesley-Ann Jones

2-tier motoring rules make me scared stiff

Picture: ROGER VIOLLET COLLECTION/GETTY

Animal passions run in Bardot's family

BRIGITTE Bardot's funeral next Wednesday at Saint-Tropez's Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption Catholic church will be live-streamed on screens in the ancient port and the town's Place des Lices market square. She will then be buried privately, in a cemetery overlooking the sea: reunited with her parents and first husband Roger Vadim, the writer and director who immortalised her in And God Created Woman.

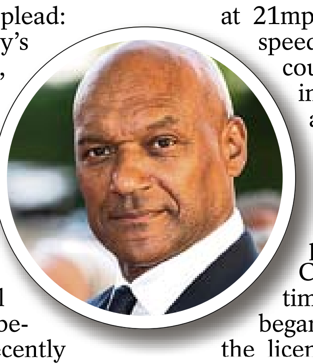
If you're watching, look out for the lady once tipped to eclipse BB with her fragile, shimmering beauty. Marie-Jeanne, known as Mijanou, now 87, is Bardot's younger sister, *pictured together in 1955*. A global movie career beckoned. But she shunned the public eye, not caring to bare her breasts, and suggested they ask her sister to do it instead.

Some years ago, I visited Mijanou and her daughter Camille at the former's Saint-Tropez home. This serene woman clearly lived a charmed life. What was her secret? "Animals," she said. "Our beloved pets."

As my Express colleague Virginia Blackburn reflected earlier this week, Brigitte also preferred her animals to men. Did the sisters know something we don't?

SURPRISE, surprise: the morally outraged, having yet again grasped the stick's wrong end, are out dishing vitriol and rage over the plight of Colin Salmon – he of bit-part Bond outings and appearances on EastEnders and Prime Suspect.

Contrary to the consensus, the actor did not land in court for the arguably minor misdemeanour of driving at 24mph in a 20mph zone. He was hauled before the beak on an accumulation of offences that had racked up his penalty points and was on the verge of being disqualified.



He was there to plead: that as his family's sole breadwinner, his lung-diseased wife and previously cancer-stricken daughter depend on him, and that he has to drive to work assignments and hospital appointments because, having recently had a hip replacement, the 64-year-old would struggle on public transport.

The predictable uproar – the punitive war on motorists, the monstrous waste of time and taxpayers' money on petty court cases, our government's and police forces' inability to tackle serious, life-threatening crime because they are off chasing easy targets, and the blatant cash-grab by local councils who rake in millions in fines – is also a timely reminder that in two-tier Britain, you play by the rules and you get screwed.

Because while law-abiding, tax-paying citizens attend speed-awareness courses, pay our fines and live in fear of doing it again, legions of criminals are avoiding detection and punishment by purchasing illegal ghost number plates from suppliers who, get this, are registered with the DVLA. One in 15 vehicles are estimated to have been fitted with the camera-confounding ghost plates with "four-dimensional" raised lettering.

The loophole, it is feared, is already being exploited by grooming gangs and risks national security by failing to apprehend terrorists. Who is investigating this? Where's the clampdown?

Since the gradual rollout of London's 20mph limit that began in March 2020, I have been done three times. Caught at 21mph, I paid for a speed awareness course instead of incurring a fine and points.

The second offence, also at 21mph, fetched the fine and points.

Captured a third time, at 24mph, I began to fear losing the licence I'd held for 40-plus years. I drive about 1,500 miles each month, on work and other commitments, including seeing my mother in her nursing home two hours away. I'm a cautious, vigilant driver. On motorways, which terrify me, I rarely exceed 60mph.

Why have I found it challenging to adhere to the lower legal limit? Because of intimidation from angry scofflaw drivers who tailgate, overtake and undertake precariously. I have one eye on them and the other on the speed dial, while both should be focused on the road. I am now so nervous behind the wheel that I should probably give up driving. It's what they want, isn't it?

● *Carole Malone is away*

GORDON'S FAMILY DON'T DESERVE TO BE FODDER FOR THE RUMOUR MILL

I HAVE squirmed at the venom spewed over Adam Peaty and Holly Ramsay. What a way for two young people to begin married life. However the Olympian and his fair maid met is a matter for them.

Whatever has gone down between the warring clans, causing most of Adam's relatives to be disinvited and prompting outpourings of grief by his mother Caroline, no one knows what goes on behind closed doors.

Despite his hellraising image, I can attest first-hand that Holly's dad is a dude. Gordon and I have worked on some good assignments together. Our sons attended the same school. I once went to dinner with Frank Warren, the boxing promoter who is godfather to my last-born, at Ramsay's Claridge's. As we were ordering, the maitre d' approached to say that Mr Ramsay was on the line from Mauritius. Moments later, a £200 bottle of wine arrived. When Frank later asked for the bill, we were informed it was on the house.

Speak as you find, raise your glass, keep your nose out of it and wish 'em well, I say.

Sayings should be brown bread!

I'VE LONG had a thing about the expressions people use in place of plain "dead", as if avoiding the word somehow softens the blow. Whether our loved one has left us, snuffed it, shuffled off this mortal coil, gone to a better place, popped their clogs, kicked the bucket, bitten the dust or given up the ghost, or is pushing up daisies 6ft under or having a big sleep, they're still dead.

A Marie Curie poll a few years ago revealed some even weirder phrases. Turning turtle, anyone? Wearing a wooden onesie?

Nearly 50% of us use "passed away". This euphemism infuriates me. As it does Richard E Grant. The actor, who lost his wife Joan four years ago, confides on a podcast: "No disrespect, but passed sounds like you've passed wind or passed out or fainted or whatever. No, you're dead. Passed is another thing."

Is that because of its implication we have gone somewhere else? We won't know until we get there.

■ ASTROLOGER Justin Toper, formerly of this newspaper, has repaired to the galaxy aged 67. The tousled blond was a quasi-rock star with a roving eye and nicotine addiction.

He would never be drawn on predictions, protesting that horoscopes are interpretations.

"Most readers know already what to expect of their day or week," he once confided. "All they are seeking is reassurance, that their world isn't about to cave in. If I can give them that, I'm worth my weight in gold."

Yes he was.

■ **THERE has been effusive bitching over Jools' Holland's annual Hootenanny on BBC Two. Viewers are divided. About half feel insulted that the pre-recorded show features an as-live countdown to the New Year. They moan that this year's offering was lacklustre. The other half are raving.**

I caught up with some of it on iPlayer last night, specifically to watch Jessie J's performance of My Way, accompanied on piano by Jools. Breast cancer survivor Jessie was triumphant.

All by myself in my little front room, I stood up, raised my mug of chamomile and applauded her. If ever an artist personified a song, Jessie J did. Watch her fly.

DAILY EXPRESSO SEE HOST JJ ANISIOBI AND GUESTS IN NEW EPISODES MONDAY TO FRIDAY ON THE EXPRESS YOUTUBE CHANNEL

HOW TO END MALAISE

Voters want leaders who

SATURDAY'S BIG READ

DAVID WILLIAMSON

Chief Political Commentator

KEIR Starmer and Kemi Badenoch would do well to tune into a classic BBC series if they want inspiration for securing the survival of their parties and to revive Britain.

They need to stop voters desperate for change and disillusioned with traditional Westminster politics from flocking to Reform UK and the Greens.

Fortunately for the PM and the leader of the Opposition, there is an instructive documentary on iPlayer which provides the sharpest of insights into how once-great societies crack up – and how they can be rescued. Long before he became Britain's best loved nature presenter, then-BBC Two controller David Attenborough commissioned art historian Sir Kenneth Clark to create Civilisation, a 13-episode exploration of the wonders of western Europe's greatest ideas, art and architecture. The result is a pioneering work of early colour television, carrying a cautionary warning that even mighty civilisations are "quite fragile".

In the 1969 book to accompany the series, Sir Kenneth wrote: "[If] one asks why the civilisation of Greece and Rome collapsed, the real answer is that it was exhausted."

This may send a slight shiver down many a spine in modern Britain, a country where neighbours stop each other on the street to share examples of how "nothing works any more".

People routinely swap horror stories of hours spent in A&E or how loved ones have had long-awaited operations or appointments with a consultant cancelled.

Anyone taking a major journey by train who has not been able to book far ahead faces a gulp-inducing fare and lives in dread of an announcement the journey will be completed on a rail replacement bus service.

People in jobs are working flat-out but without the prospect of a happy retirement. The final-salary pension schemes which gave many the hope of a comfortable old age have largely vanished in the private sector and financial experts routinely issue warnings that millions of us will struggle to make ends meet.

Sir Kenneth warned of "exhaustion, the feeling of hopelessness which can overtake people even with a high degree of material prosperity". Such weariness is deepened by the corrosive belief that the UK is a nation in decline.

Type "British malaise" into a search engine and you will find an array of articles detailing our productivity crisis, the stagnation of wages since the financial crisis in the first decade of the 21st century, and the failure of the economy to grow.

Ambitious

Throw in the horrors of the cost of living crisis – exacerbated by sky-high electricity bills – which also holds back industry, and you could be forgiven for doubting that Britain is match-fit to compete against new, ferociously ambitious economic powerhouses such as China and India.

These countries have seen the living standards of hundreds of millions of people transformed in just a few decades. In sharp contrast with the UK, they have a certainty that their young people will enjoy a level of prosperity unthinkable for previous generations; the fusion of personal ambition, national pride and the sense of being part of a project bigger than themselves.

It is rocket fuel for progress. But in Britain the spectacular failure of the housing market to meet demand means not-so-young people cannot afford a grim two-bedroom flat, never mind a terraced house with a garden in which to raise a family.

Britain's status as a property-owning democracy is in danger, as are the social benefits which come when people acquire bricks and mortar and put down roots in a community.

When hard work is not a springboard to prosperity and young people fear they will be worse off than their parents, a country is in trouble.

If citizens conclude that the country is broken, their confidence in Britain as a place of fairness and opportunity and in their potential to earn a decent standard of living, will collapse.

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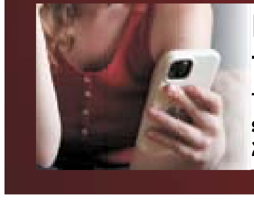

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SO MANY PEOPLE FEEL

can save our civilisation

Historian Sir Kenneth Clark's TV analysis of how civilisations rise, thrive and fall is worth watching for Keir Starmer, left, and Kemi Badenoch, otherwise people will turn to alternatives such as Reform's Nigel Farage, below left, and Green's Zack Polanski

Some will emigrate, others will despair. There were 946,000 people aged between 16 and 24 who were not in work, education or training between July and September.

Many who are in university will leave saddled with tens of thousands of pounds in debt. Faith in the future is undermined by a lack of investment. It is frightening that the UK is in last place in the G7 on this vital measurement.

Why is public and private investment just 18.6% of GDP here but 22.8% in Canada and 27.4% in Japan? How come we are incapable of laying the rail track and building the power stations our economy manifestly requires?

In Civilisation, Sir Kenneth argued: "Of course, civilisation requires a modicum of material prosperity – enough to provide a little leisure.

"But, far more, it requires confidence – confidence in the society in which one lives, belief in its philosophy, belief in its laws and confidence in one's own mental powers."

Last month, pollsters Ipsos reported a mere 12% of Britons thought the country is going in the right direction.

This is more than just winter gloom. There is an endemic sense that Britain is in trouble.

Repeated warnings about a recruitment crisis in the military and procurement fiascos heighten fears that the nation is not ready to fight a major war.

The hollowing-out of high streets robs residents of shared spaces in which they can take pride, just as extortionate parking charges and the profusion of potholes cements the belief that citizens are being squeezed for cash but the state is failing in basic responsibilities.

For years, governments have pledged to spread wealth beyond London and the South-East, but prosperity is the train that has failed to arrive in swathes of our former industrial heartlands.

Thousands of voters in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland want to call time on the very existence of the United Kingdom.

In May's local elections, pro-independence Plaid Cymru may be the biggest grouping in the Senedd in Cardiff Bay and the Scottish National Party, despite years of turmoil, could still emerge as the most popular choice in Scotland.

Meanwhile, Irish nationalists are preparing for a future referendum on unification with the Republic of Ireland.

When a government makes the case for curtailing jury trials to tackle a scandalous backlog in our courts people will worry a pillar of British civilisation is collapsing.

Insecurity

The inability of successive administrations to tackle the small boats crisis in the Channel shakes confidence in our society's ability to get things done.

We can take neither future prosperity nor peace for granted.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine made that clear. Today's insecurity could spiral into flat-out fear with devastating effects.

Sir Kenneth described how "fear of war, fear of invasion, fear of plague and famine" make it "simply not worthwhile constructing things, or planting trees or even planting next year's crops".

In contrast, a society which is excited about the future will invest in its young people and treat their mental health problems as a national emergency.

It will create buildings of beauty for future generation, its values will command confidence across a diverse nation.

To survive, Sir Keir and Mrs Badenoch need to show they can restore integrity and competence to the highest level of governments which will once again be engines of hope. If they cannot, voters will give the likes of Nigel Farage or Zack Polanski the chance to save our civilisation.

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■ Premier League: Title-chasing Aston Villa host Nottingham Forest at 12:30pm. Following two 3pm fixtures, the day concludes with Arsenal visiting Bournemouth at 5:30pm.

■ Scottish Premiership: The year kicks off with a massive Old Firm Derby as Celtic host Rangers at 12:30pm. Later at 3pm, Hearts take on Livingston.

■ Horse racing at Sandown: It is Veterans' Chase Day, featuring a seven-race card starting at 12:05pm. The 3.05pm feature race is a gruelling three-mile test for horses aged 10 and older.

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TAKE TIME TO THINK
taketimetothink.co.uk

Can't Beet our classic heirloom

R THERE'S roughly a 20-year age gap between myself and my co-host on GMB last week, Ranvir Singh (and you don't need me to tell you which one of us is the oldest). It's not that big a difference but sometimes two decades can represent a gulf wider than the Grand Canyon.

We were interviewing Chesney Hawkes (who had a monster hit with The One And Only 30-odd years ago) and he handed me a cassette tape of his latest album. Cassettes are the latest retro music fashion statement, along with vinyl records, but Ranvir smiled. "What are you going to listen to that on?" she laughed. "Who has a cassette player these days?"

Er... I do. Or rather, my wife does – on the dashboard console of her little VW Beetle. Ranvir was astonished.

"Cars don't have cassette players these days!"

Ours does. It's 23 years old and a relic of the pre-DVD or digital age. And a much-loved and cherished member of our family. Heading for a quarter of a century on the road, it's barely covered 27,000 miles: mechanically speaking, that makes it around three years old.

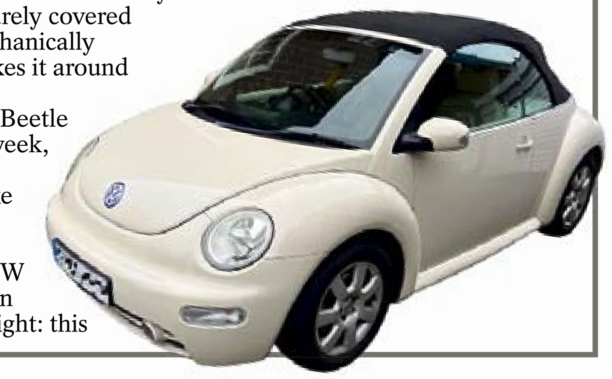
We drive Judy's Beetle most days of the week, and as it's a convertible we take the top down in summer. It's huge fun. But, sadly, a VW of that vintage is an increasingly rare sight: this week, the RAC reported that "classic" cars dating from the 1990s and early Noughties have all but vanished from the roads.

For example, only 900 Vauxhall Cavaliers remain. Thirty years ago there were more than 1.2 million of them. It was the UK's third most popular car and widely seen as a stalwart of motoring history.

Remember the Austin Metro? Back in 1994 you couldn't move for them – half a million of the things puttered around. Today, fewer than 250 are left. It's pretty much the same for the once-ubiquitous Ford Orion. Almost half a million in '94: 272 now.

I'm surprised there aren't more. "These 1990s underdogs were the first truly modern cars that offered economy, durability and performance," a spokesman for the Historic & Classic Vehicles Alliance said, adding pointedly: "If well-serviced."

That's the key. Our faithful old Beetle has never missed a service. And it's never let us down. D'you know, I'm beginning to think it'll outlive us both.



J **MUCH jeering at BBC and ITV for both channels' lowest-ever Christmas TV ratings. Well duh! Of course viewing figures were down. It's no more surprising than the decline in sales of horses and traps as the motor car moved from niche ownership into mass production and affordability. Yes, it's true that once "must view" programmes flatlined this Christmas. The King's mum could routinely expect audiences of anything up to 25 million for her Christmas Day Queen's speech. Last week, Charles barely scraped 4.5 million for his. And that was the day's most-watched programme!**

It's because the TV landscape has irrevocably shifted. Where once there were just two channels, and later a paltry three or four, now there are hundreds. Not to mention the dominance of social media and internet "hits". The cake is divided into wafer-thin slivers of the slices it once was. Anyway, people simply don't gather around their TVs like they used to. It's no longer the electronic fireplace glowing and flickering in the corner of the room.

Richard and I used to routinely pull in more than two million viewers for our off-peak daytime shows. My oh my, those were the days!

Richard&Judy

BRITAIN'S BEST-LOVED HUSBAND AND WIFE TEAM REFLECT ON THE WEEK'S EVENTS EVERY SATURDAY IN YOUR DAILY EXPRESS

J WATCHING the 60-year-old movie and news footage of Brigitte Bardot, who died at her home in the south of France last weekend, I was struck by just how modern and contemporary she looked, more than half a century ago. No woman had ever looked quite like that before and Bardot set the template that is still with us today. Walk down any high street and you will see the Bardot "look" everywhere – long, tumbling hair, smokey eyes... women still ask their hairdressers to "give me a bit of Bardot". What a style icon she was. RIP, Brigitte.

Betty made a stand and delivered

J THIS is a time of year for looking back; reviewing what we've done, what we've been through, how our lives and the circumstances that have been visited on us have shaped us. Looking forward, too, at what the future holds, the possibilities every New Year brings.

This week, the extraordinary woman that is Betty Brown, the oldest surviving victim of the Post Office Horizon scandal, was looking in both directions – behind her, and what havoc the last quarter of a century has wrought on her life – and ahead, at her ambitions for 2026.

Not bad, for a woman of 92. Quite a place to stand, on a watershed of suffering on one side and achievement and hope on the other.

Betty, of course, was made an OBE in this week's New Year Honours list. It was a recognition of her relentless campaigning to expose the crisis that wrecked lives and careers the length and breadth of the UK.

Betty and her late husband Oswall – who died a broken man before the couple could prove their innocence of accusations that they were to blame for colossal losses accumulated at their County Durham post office – were left financially ruined by errors in the Horizon IT system. They were forced to pay almost £100,000 to cover the shortfalls, and ended up having to sell their little business.

But Betty fought back. She was part of Alan Bates's campaign to prove the Post Office's utter calumny, and recently received due compensation (not before time). Now in her 10th decade, she continues to campaign for other sub-postmasters yet to be similarly compensated.

Betty Brown has been reflecting on how different her life could have been

Richard interviewed her for Good Morning Britain on Tuesday, and the evening before I suggested a question. "Ask her what her life would have been like if all this had never happened."

So he did. Betty paused before replying.

"I would have been like you!"

Slightly surprised, Richard asked her what she meant. "I would have been achieving the life I'd planned, not the one forced upon me. I would have reached the goals I wanted to reach. I would have had an ENTIRELY different kind of life."

And what were those goals?

"Oh! I wanted success! I wanted business success! I wanted to achieve for the sake of my children! I wanted to guarantee their future."

Instead, Betty had all those hopes and dreams brutally torn from her hands.

She found herself in a fight to the death with a faceless, soulless, unimaginably cruel bureaucracy.

And not one of the senior managers behind that blank, unfeeling mask has yet to be brought to justice. Not one.

Betty's suggestion as to their fate? "We should take the lot of them out to sea in a locked, floating box, and throw away the key."

I can think of worse ideas, can't you?

R WE'RE into the new year now, but one last nod to Christmas – and specifically, the King's speech. Why no acknowledgement of the fact that 2025 saw the expulsion from the Royal Family of a man who was once second in line to the throne? Andrew was truly the elephant in the room: albeit a de-tusked and de-princed pachyderm.

It would have been more honest of Charles to reference the fall of the House of York last year – at least some mention of his younger brother's banishment. Perhaps the King's silence was a sign that there's even worse to come.

HUMBLE HURST PROVES HE'S A NATURAL LAWN WINNER

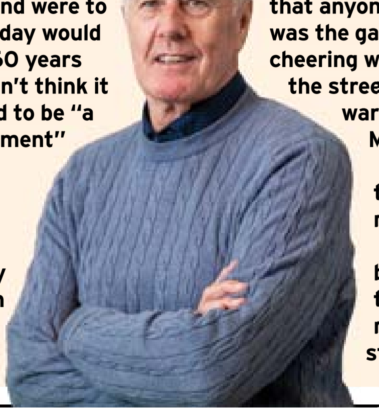
R THE ONLY surviving member of the England World Cup squad that lifted the trophy, Sir Geoff Hurst, has been speaking about that momentous Saturday on July 30, 1966. Or, rather, the day after.

This week he revealed that rather than trailing clouds of glory that summer Sunday, he was trailing soap suds. And grass clippings.

"The morning after we won the World Cup I washed my car and mowed the lawn, my regular Sunday routine in 1966," he says. This, after scoring a sensational hat-trick less than 24 hours earlier; three stunning goals that helped seal England's famous victory against West Germany 4-2 in extra time at Wembley Stadium. (A stadium that still boasted its proud towers, not today's stupid leaning arch.)

Sir Geoff added that the media furore if England were to win the World Cup today would dwarf the coverage 60 years ago and that he doesn't think it was really considered to be "a monumental achievement" back then.

Oh but it WAS, Sir Geoff.



While you were cleaning your car, my dad and I were awash with every Sunday newspaper on sale, clipping out the banner headlines and photos (mostly of YOU) that dominated page after page, and sticking them in a scrapbook! Next day at the shops, all that anyone could talk about was the game! Spontaneous cheering would still erupt on the streets without warning! It was MEGA!

And you were the toast of the nation!

It was a VERY big deal. And to those of us who remember it, it still is.

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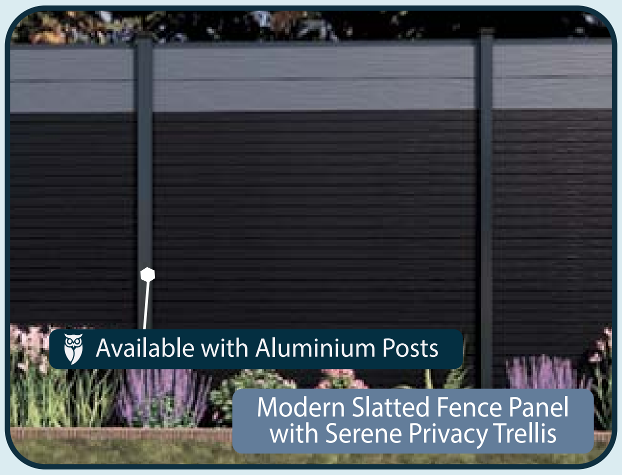
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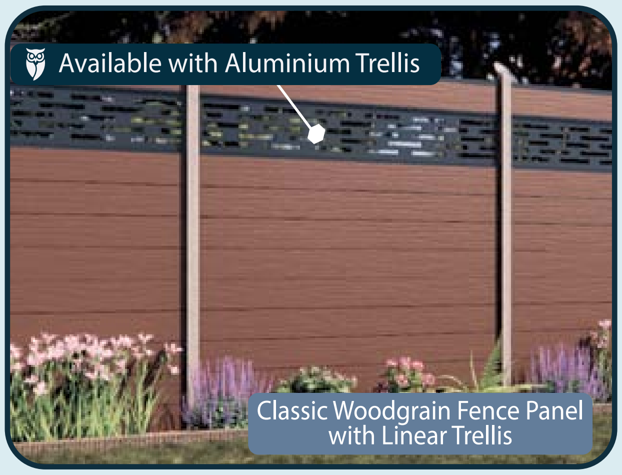
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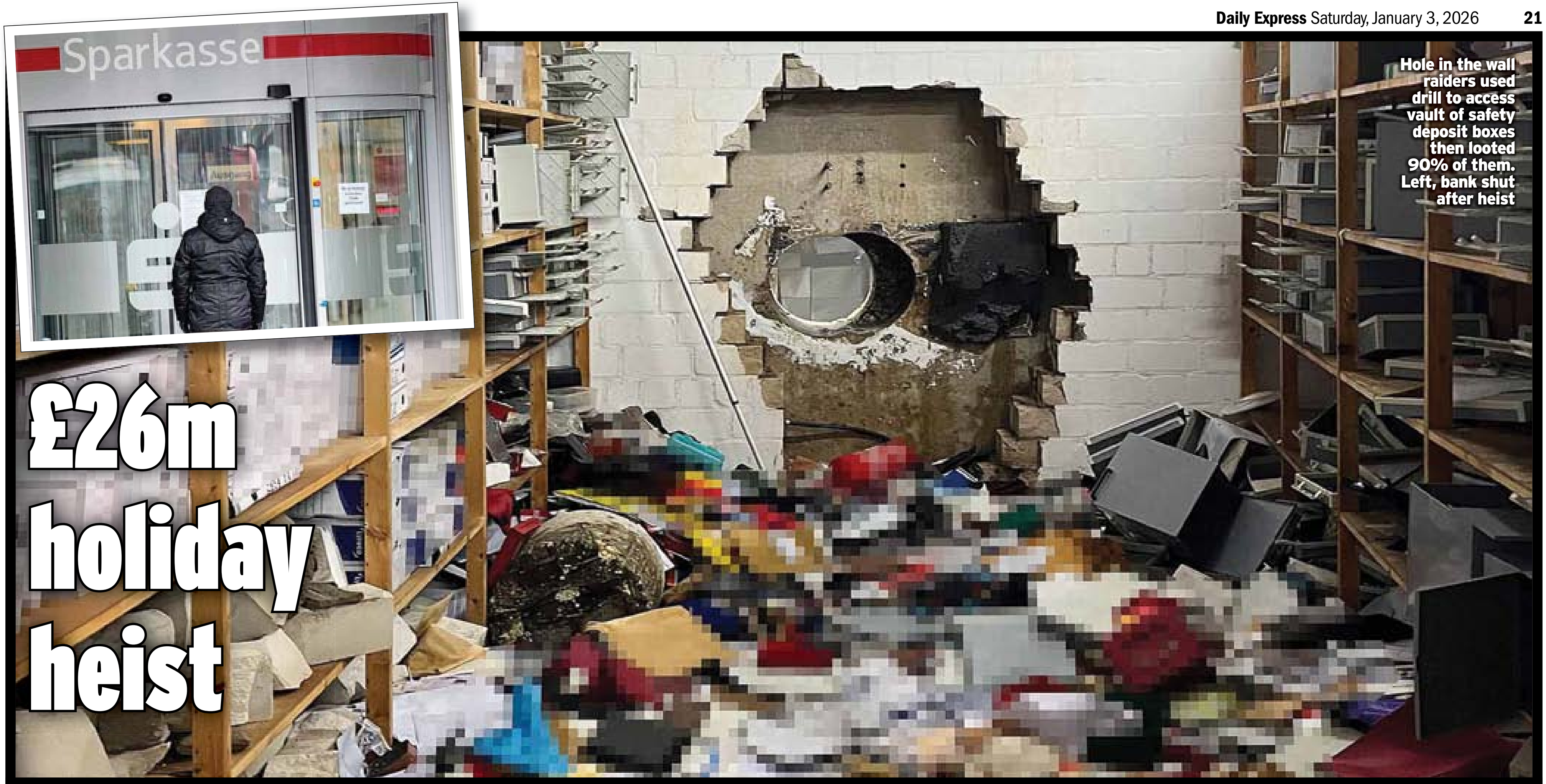
£26m holiday heist



Hole in the wall raiders used drill to access vault of safety deposit boxes then looted 90% of them. Left, bank shut after heist

RAIDERS pulled off a daring £26million bank heist by drilling through an 18in reinforced concrete wall into the vault.

The burglary – likely Germany's most lucrative – was only discovered when a fire alarm went off inside the Sparkasse bank branch in Gelsenkirchen.

Police believe the gang tunnelled into the vault from an archive room next door using a three-stone diamond-tipped drill. Once they got in last weekend, they took their time emptying its 3,300 safe deposit boxes.

The suspects were seen hauling bags of swag in the stairwell of a nearby car park on Saturday night. Early on Monday morning, CCTV appears to show them paying their parking fees and driving off in a Mercedes van and an Audi.

BY **EMILY WRIGHT**

A police spokesman said: "You don't find this kind of drill in a hardware store," adding the raiders "took advantage of the quiet of the Christmas period. A great deal of prior knowledge and criminal energy must have been involved to plan and carry this out very professionally".

Around 2,700 customers rented at least one box and 90% of them were cleared out. Yesterday hundreds of angry customers gathered outside the bank, in the west of the country, as news of the heist emerged.

Investigators say the thieves entered the archive room via a parking garage. They used jerry cans, hoses and a pump to cool the machinery as they drilled.

The gang may have been inspired by the £14m Hatton Garden heist. The elderly raiders drilled through a 20in wall into a vault over the Easter break in April 2015 and looted 73 safety deposit boxes of gold ingots, jewels and cash.

Ten people were jailed in connection with the London burglary but not all of the spoils were recovered.

Clare Balding's tribute as royal racehorse trainer dad dies at 87

BY **EMILY FERGUSON** Royal Editor

BROADCASTER Clare Balding has paid tribute to her "one of a kind" racehorse trainer father Ian, who has died aged 87.

He trained for some of racing's most famous owners, including Elizabeth II and the Queen Mother, but was best known for preparing 1971 Derby winner Mill Reef.

Passing his licence to son Andrew, he retired from training in 2002. Clare was a leading amateur rider before her TV work.

She posted photos of her father online and wrote: "My Dad was one of a kind. Fearless, funny and charming he was an all-round sportsman, a great trainer and a beautiful horseman.

"He loved his dogs, his horses and his family – probably in that order.

"He shared with me his passion for sport and taught me to be brave enough to chase a dream, even if it seemed impossible. We'll miss him so much."

Ian was a Cheltenham Festival-winning amateur rider and later sent out top-class horses from his Kingsclere yard including Glint Of Gold, Selkirk and Lochsong.

The Hampshire yard posted: "We are deeply sorry to share the sad news that Ian Balding has passed away. A wonderful family man, a hugely successful racehorse trainer and a brilliant sportsman. He will be greatly missed." Celebrities wrote messages of support to Clare, with The Traitors host Claudia Winkleman saying: "Sending you all my love", while I'm A Celebrity winner Georgia Toffolo said: "Sending you so much love Clare, so very sorry."

Elizabeth II with Ian Balding at Sandown in 2005

Legendary jockey Frankie Dettori said Ian "was a tremendous supporter of mine in my early days", adding: "We shared some wonderful moments together, notably with Lochsong and Lochangel.

"It was through Ian that I was first given the opportunity to ride for Her Majesty The Queen, something I will always be deeply grateful for. My heartfelt condolences go out to the Balding family." Ian had spoken admiringly of Elizabeth II's knowledge: "The Queen could easily have trained horses herself. When she used to come round the stables here, I'd pick her out about 40 horses to look at.

"She'd want to see all the good ones and even some of the bad ones to compare with her own. She was also very observant. Sometimes you would have liked to say, 'Ma'am, I wouldn't come into this box, this horse might kick you'.

"But I didn't have to say it – she would instinctively stay out of the box. She is just a natural horsewoman."

Ian Balding's father Gerald was a polo player and racehorse trainer while his late brother Toby is among elite handlers who have had winners of the Grand National, Gold Cup and Champion Hurdle.

His big break was being appointed assistant to Peter Hastings-Bass at Kingsclere's Park House Stables. Hastings-Bass died of cancer at 43 and Balding inherited influential owners, including the then-Queen.

He won the Imperial Cup at Sandown in 1986 with the Queen Mother's Insular and trained Cheltenham winner Crystal Spirit, in the 1991 Sun Alliance Novices' Hurdle.

As a trainer, he helped many aspiring riders including Derby winner Martin Dwyer, who paid tribute to "a great man who was loved and respected by many".

TV sports host Clare Balding with her racehorse trainer father Ian, whose horse Mill Reef won the Derby in 1971

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Lammy bids to recruit 2,000 magistrates to speed justice

Justice Secretary Lammy

BY **ANAHITA HOSSEIN-POUR**

TWO thousand magistrates are being sought to volunteer in England and Wales to help speed up justice.

The recruitment drive comes amid plans to reform the courts system, including increasing JPs' sentencing powers from 12 to 18 months – to free up crown courts.

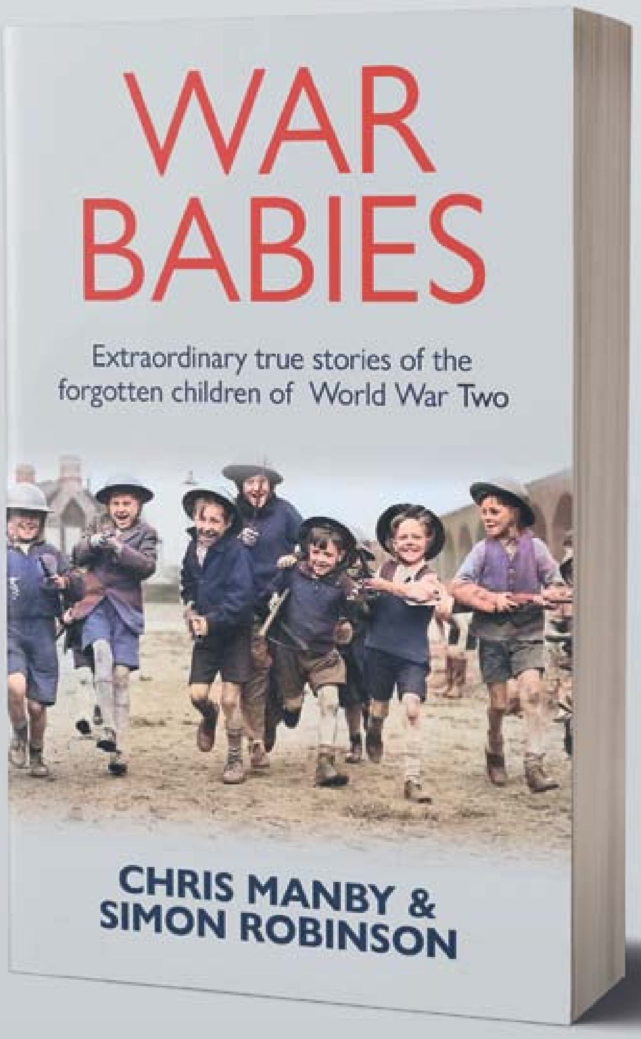
Justice Secretary David Lammy said: "They are everyday heroes – and we need more people of every age and background to volunteer, not just to deliver justice but to serve and represent their local communities.

"Volunteering to become a magistrate can make a real difference to your life and the lives of others - that's why I'm calling on the public to apply and play your part." JPs must volunteer at least 13 days a year.

Judiciary chiefs are looking for candidates with a sense of fairness, the ability to see an argument from all sides and good communication skills.

The Magistrates' Association said the move was a "big vote of confidence" but more resources are needed for the courts, including enough trained, well-paid legal advisers.

THERE WERE NO MEDALS FOR THE WAR BABIES, BUT THEIR STORIES MUST BE TOLD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Gervais poses beside his star on Hollywood Walk of Fame last May

BY **MARC BAKER**

RICKY Gervais turns 65 in June and could be forgiven for feeling exhausted with a workload that includes a new tour and animation series while also in the running for a Golden Globes award.

The comedian admits he tires more easily these days but also told of his love of napping, or "taking a Churchill".

He says: "I don't know what it will be like for people to see me at 70. I'm already sort of grumpy and I shuffle around."

However, he adds: "I'm a big napper. I was once offered the part of Winston Churchill. I turned it down as it would have been terrible. It would have been three hours in make-up and puffing a cigar.

"Funnily enough, Churchill famously took a nap every day, even during the war, he'd get full pyjamas between the sheets. We call it 'taking a Churchill'. I took a Churchill this morning."

With his busy lifestyle, Ricky likes to travel by private jet when possible and turn his gigs into 48-hour breaks.

Holiday

He says: "I do the most luxurious tour possible. I do two or three nights away at the most and four nights home."

Sometimes his partner of 43 years, Jane Fallon, goes with him. He says: "She comes to all the good places. She comes to America, Canada, all the lovely places in Europe. I make it a little weekend break.

"So I'll play Prague Arena and we'll go the night before, we'll have dinner, we'll walk around all day, and then I'll pop to the arena and do a gig, and then we fly home. So it's like 46 hours of holiday and two hours of work."

Six years after Ricky Gervais tore into Hollywood's elite as host of the Golden Globes, he has been nominated for a gong for his new Netflix show Mortality.

A contender for Best Performance in Stand-Up Comedy at the 2026 Golden Globes on January 11, he makes no apologies for his controversial digs.

He says of the US ceremony: "I love that they put a bunch of booze on the table. They try to get everybody hammered so when they go up there, they do something interesting. That's the good and bad thing about the Golden Globes."

With partner Jane Fallon; dancing as David Brent in The Office in 2002; and Churchill, Ricky's napping hero

Awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in May, he is planning a new self-parodying TV show, too.

Ricky says: "I've got the title, the idea but I can't even discuss it now. We are maybe shooting in the next 12 months"

Fans are also eagerly awaiting the release of his adult animation Netflix series, Alley Cats, following a group of feral British cats. He says: "It's like two years and it still isn't quite finished. It won't be out

I tell Jane, 'Look, I've got an idea' and she says, 'Please don't say that in public'

'I'm a big napper. We call it taking a Churchill'

till the end of next year. We're a group of sort of feral cats living in a disused basement and we watch TV and go out and cause havoc.

"They're sort of the meanest, sweariest cats in the world. Bottom of the pile. It's all about sort of survival."

The show is close to Ricky's heart, who reportedly gave £2.43million to animal charities this Christmas.

He says pets were like a member of the family as a boy in Reading, adding: "I've always thought animals were unconditionally sort of perfect and beautiful and should be treated well.

"I've never understood animal cruelty. And then the older you get, the more you find out there's so much you didn't know was going on.

"That's why I became vegan as well, because the terrible cruelty in this sort of farm industry."

Having just finished one tour, Ricky is due on tour again this month.

He adds: "I'm doing warm-ups for the next tour, which will be two years."

He met Jane at University College London in the early 80s and even runs jokes past her.

Ricky says: "I usually go jogging and I come up with an idea and think 'Oh, that's a good joke'. I then run home and I tell Jane.

"I go, 'Look, I've got an idea'. I tell her and she says, 'Please don't say that in public'.

"And I know that I can work on that, that it's got something."

Estimated to be worth £130m, the David Brent star has no need for another hit like The Office, but he looks back on the BBC series with fondness.

He says: "I knew it was different. I was the only one that really improvised. I did that at the beginning and end of scenes. Or just to make the actors think a little bit and make it real. Or do something different to make them laugh. Put them on their back foot."

But it is the simple things in life that make him laugh – like his mum Eva telling him he was a mistake. He says: "When I was about 13, I said to her, 'Why am I so much younger than my brothers and sisters?' She just went, 'You were a mistake.' And I laughed. And that taught me that honesty is funny."

Ricky also says British comedians are the best in the world. He adds: "We are court jesters. We're down in the mud with the other peasants laughing at the King."

The Netflix series Ricky Gervais: Mortality is available to stream now.

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Teach woodwork or this skill will bow out

BY **LULA WHITE**

ONE of the last violin makers in the UK fears his centuries-old craft may die out if youngsters are not taught woodwork.

Rudolf Pilsel has made violins, violas, cellos and bows for more than 50 years – but there are now only 20 UK luthiers left.

His violins cost from £6,500, his cellos start at £12,500 and his bows a minimum £2,000. A violin and matching bow can take up to two months to create and his instruments are played around the world.

Rupert, 72, says eco-restrictions mean that key materials are becoming very hard to source. "The wood used to create these intricate bows – pernambuco wood from Brazil – now has to be registered by the government," he explained. "It became endangered, and so you are not allowed to update your stock either.

"If you try to buy from Germany or France, where production is larger than the UK, you will have trouble bringing them back because of the ivory, whale bone and tortoiseshell used in the bows."

Captivated

Rudolf says some modern alternatives are not to every musician's taste: "People now use carbon fibre but each bow's hair is so particular to the player and to the instrument. Some may get on with carbon, but other players don't.

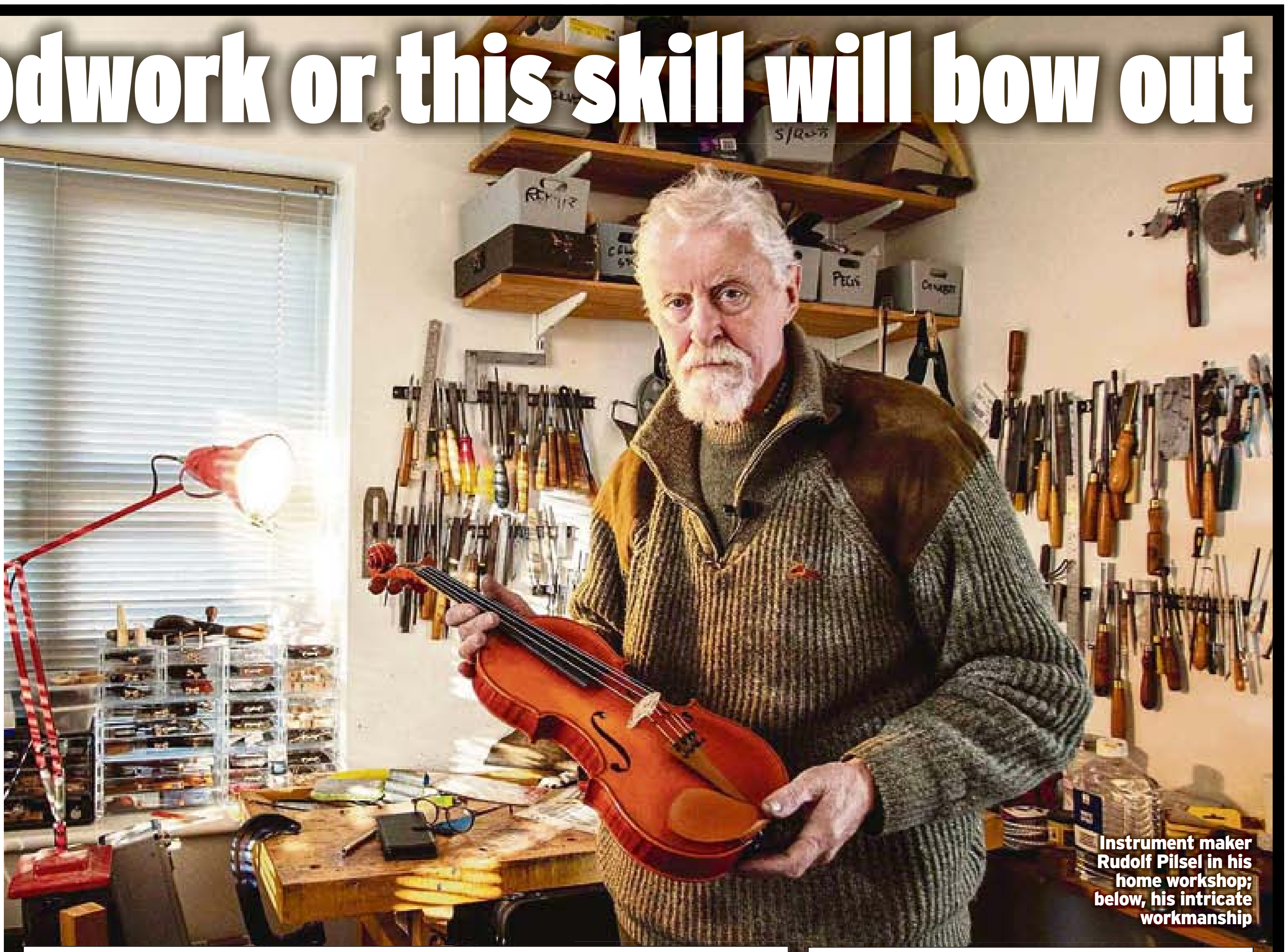
"There are people that would like to make the bows but I began to do woodwork at school...because it captivated me.

"If I didn't know how to do woodwork then, I wouldn't be making violins and cellos by 21 – it is a long-term thing."

He went on: "Schools don't teach woodwork like they used to, it's rarer. They'll teach you how to pay a mortgage, but they won't chuck a bit of tree at you and tell you to carve it by hand anymore."

Rudolf has found materials closer to home. He said: "A lady around the corner was cutting down a whole tree and gave it to us. It was 12 tons of wood and took us weeks and weeks to cut down."

He added: "You never know truly how the bow will sound...I like to go to watch the instruments I have made play."



Instrument maker Rudolf Pilsel in his home workshop; below, his intricate workmanship

Frier Andrew Crook offers quality fare at his shop

Traditional chippies are getting battered

BY **CHARLIE FENTON**

THE HEAD of Britain's fish and chip shop industry has warned traditional chippies will "become more niche" in five years as they battle to survive.

Andrew Crook, 50 – who is the president of the National Federation of Fish Friers – said more are adding burgers and pizzas to their menus to get by. There are around 11,000 fish and chip shops now. At their peak in the 1920s there were 35,000.

Andrew, who has run Skippers in Euxton, Lancs, since 2007, believes his shop is now one of only a handful up and down the country which still sell only the iconic dish.

Andrew at work at his fish and chip shop Skippers, in Euxton, Lancs

He said: "Businesses I never thought would add the likes of burgers or loaded chips are doing so at an increased rate. Our sector is similar to butchers.

"In the 1950s they had no competition but when supermarkets could do average quality meat in volume only the butchers who offered top-quality produce with excellent customer service survived. I think fish and chip shops will become more niche over the next five years."

Andrew said recent menu changes have been caused by the increased price of fish and also online ordering by families who want a wider range of dishes.

Cut-price supermarket fare and reduced fishing quotas are also taking their toll.

However Andrew does not think it is all doom and gloom – many shops are exploring other options to drive sales, including different types of fish such as Norwegian saithe, pollock and hake.

He added: "As such a part of the culture it is important that fish and chip shops adapt.

"We've been around for over 160 years and I am sure we will be around for a lot longer."

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MS treatment on NHS gives patients hope

BY **HANNA GEISSLER**
Health Editor

THOUSANDS of people in England with a type of multiple sclerosis are to benefit from a new treatment on the NHS.

Natalizumab, which is given every four weeks as an infusion or injection, has been recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

It will be available as an option for people with relapsing-remitting MS – the most common form of the condition which causes symptoms to flare up.

Patients may have the treatment in cases where the autoimmune disease remains highly active after other therapies or when alternative treatments are not suitable.

A natalizumab infusion helps those with the most common form of multiple sclerosis

Choice

MS causes immune cells to attack myelin, the insulating layer that protects nerves in the brain and spinal cord.

This causes inflammation and scarring and leads to symptoms such as vision problems, weakness, fatigue and difficulties with balance.

Natalizumab works by binding immune cells to keep them in the bloodstream and prevent them from entering the brain and spinal cord.

According to Nice, there are around 123,000 people with MS, with an estimated 43,000 having RRMS at any one time.

Two versions of natalizumab have been given the go-ahead for NHS use. These are Tysabri, made by Biogen, which is given as an injection and Tyruko, made by Sandoz, given as an infusion.

Helen Knight, Nice director of medicines evaluation, said: “This recommendation means people living with highly active relapsing-remitting MS have a meaningful additional treatment option.

“Having choice matters enormously to people managing a lifelong condition. It allows individuals and their clinicians to select the treatment that best fits their personal circumstances.”

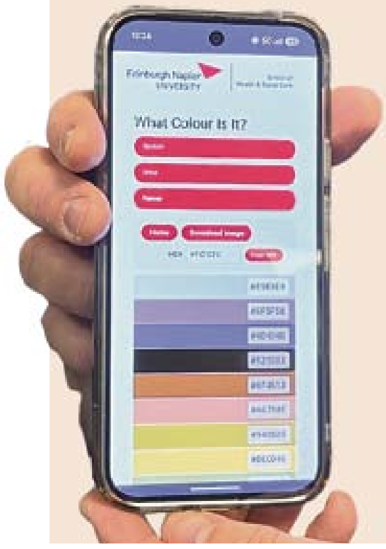
Ceri Smith, head of policy at the MS Society, said the decision will be beneficial to women who want to get pregnant. She added: “Nice’s decision will particularly benefit people who want to start a family as natalizumab can be taken during pregnancy, unlike other effective DMTs.

“We’re really pleased people with highly active relapsing MS who haven’t responded to previous disease-modifying therapies will have the option to take it.”

MS is around three times more common in women compared to men, Nice estimates.

James Palmer, at NHS England, said: “This Nice recommendation gives patients and their specialist teams another effective option when the disease remains active despite other treatments, supporting more personalised care and informed choices.”

Fluids colour test to boost care



BY **NICK FORBES**

A SIMPLE tool that makes it easier for people to describe the colour of bodily fluids could have a “huge impact” on patient care.

A team at Edinburgh Napier University has developed a colour palette to be used by patients and clinicians when describing the colour of fluids such as urine and sputum.

This information can play a key role in diagnosing, investigating and prescribing for a wide range of medical conditions.

The free online tool, called What Colour Is It?, resembles a paint colour card, with palettes of either 13 or 15 clinically relevant colours. Each has a code that can be entered into a patient’s notes, which other clinicians can use to find the exact shade referred to.

Reducing subjectivity with colours can make diagnoses faster and more accurate.

Napier’s Hazel McPhillips said: “We rely on patients describing a colour and us assuming that we’re thinking the same colour, but that’s really subjective. This toolkit really standardises that.”

The tool is being used in the UK, America, Norway, Sweden and Australia, and the team wants it to become “a normal part of our healthcare system”.

Find What Colour Is It? at https://blogs.napier.ac.uk/wcii/

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REBIRTH OF

A Seventies' superstar, by the Nineties David Bowie was washed up creatively and commercially. Then something extraordinary happened. Ten years after his tragic death aged just 69, a brilliant new book charts his incredible reinvention

EXCLUSIVE

By Alexander Larman

JANUARY 10 marks the tenth anniversary of the death of David Bowie, one of the best-loved British musicians of all time. In truth, it doesn't seem like a decade that he has been gone, because even though he is no longer around, the steady stream of reissues, live albums and biographies that have emerged since 2016 means that his presence is always felt.

Younger artists from Lady Gaga and the Last Dinner Party to Charli xcx and the Arctic Monkeys are open about how indebted to Bowie they are.

He has inspired everyone from politicians – most notably David Cameron, a fully paid-up fan who called the other David "a master of re-invention, who kept getting it right" – to filmmakers including Christopher Nolan and Martin Scorsese, who both cast him in their pictures.

In terms of personal and cultural influence in Britain, Bowie is probably second only to the Beatles, and in terms of longevity he long surpassed them.

It might be going too far to call him a national treasure – as someone who turned down a knighthood, he was averse to any kind of public fawning – but he remains one of the most popular rock stars the country has ever produced. He was a proud Londoner whose many years living in Switzerland and New York never diluted his love for his home country, nor the affection the British feel for him today.

Yet three and a half decades ago, it was a very different story.

The music critic Jon Wilde ended one especially damning review with the words, "sit down, man, you're a f***ing disgrace", and as Bowie struggled to interest the world in the dire hard-rock act Tin Machine that he founded in the late 80s, it seemed as if The Man Who Fell To Earth was now the man who was washed up.

But 25 years later, Bowie could release his final album, in the form of the magnificent swansong Blackstar, two days before his death, and know that he would be remembered as a god amongst mere mortals as long as his music is listened to, and loved.

What changed, and what went so right in the interim?

Bowie initially came to fame in 1969, after several false starts, with his hit single Space Oddity. Released on July 11 that year, it became far more prominent when the BBC used it as background music ten days later to accompany their footage of the Apollo 11 moon landings.

A top five hit, it ensured the former David Jones, who had been regarded by many as a novelty pop singer who had yet to achieve the success he thought he deserved, soon became a household name.

ALBUM after album followed, including the excellent Hunky Dory – which spawned one of his best-known and most-loved songs, Life on Mars – and The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars, a lavish concept album revolving around the idea of Bowie as the eponymous Ziggy, a "rock 'n' roll messiah" who comes to earth when the planet is said to be doomed.

He presented himself as a master of reinvention, a man who would switch bands, collaborators and musical styles from one year, even one month, to the next.

He recorded boundary-pushing new-wave rock in Berlin with Brian Eno, resulting in such albums as Low and "Heroes", and produced the dazzling Station to Station during a period when he was apparently living off cocaine, red peppers and milk, and storing his urine in jars for fear it would be stolen by witches.

He released one of his greatest-ever albums in 1980, Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps) and then followed it up with his bestselling LP, 1983's Let's Dance, in which the once-uncompromising rocker successfully transformed himself into a pop idol.

Idea after idea flowed from him, and he received adulation that his jealous peers could only dream about. And then it all went wrong. If Bowie had sold his soul to the devil to achieve earthly success, Satan came to collect at some point in 1987, when his client released his first truly dire album, Never Let Me Down. His previous release, Tonight, had been rocky too, but was saved by its singles. There was no such redemption for this release, which sold relatively poorly and was laughed at by critics and music lovers alike.

Bowie, stung, announced that he would form Tin Machine in an attempt to get back to the Ziggy days of restless creativity. Yet even as he kept telling the world that he was just a guy in a band now, not the all-conquering icon of music he had once been, few believed him.

Growing up in the 80s and 90s, I thought of Bowie as being a bit like Sting and Phil Collins: a successful middle-aged man producing the kind of tasteful but boring music that aspirational estate agents might listen to on their CD player in their car.

In fact, Bowie's misses were even worse than that. Tin Machine produced two albums which nobody much liked, and then his big 1993 comeback album, Black

Performing with the dreary Tin Machine in November 1991

'It might be too much to call him a national treasure ...but he remains one of our most popular rock stars'

DAVID BOWIE THE NEW ALBUM INCLUDES "BLACKSTAR" & "LAZARUS"
David Bowie 1947-2016
hmv

Bowie's 26th and final studio album, Blackstar, below, came out in January 2016 on his 69th birthday. Two days later he was dead

THE STARMAN

David Bowie, main, in his 1970s heyday. Right, Star's last public photo, in New York in late 2015

Glastonbury performance in June 2000 helped cement Bowie's legacy

Tie White Noise, may have been produced by Nile Rodgers, but its ragtag collection of covers and songs earnestly criticising the evils of racism failed to chime with the mood of a country emerging into the Britpop era of Blur and Oasis.

Marriage to the model Iman gave him personal fulfilment, and a reunion with Eno on the 1995 album Outside saw him produce his best work in over a decade, but the mainstream had moved on by then.

Attempts at reclaiming the zeitgeist stuttered – his drum'n'bass album Earthling was actually embarrassing, like seeing your father wearing hot pants – but when he triumphantly headlined Glastonbury in 2000, the world remembered why they'd loved Bowie so much in the first place, as he played the greatest hits set that he swore he'd never play again, and gave festival-goers the experience of their lives.

Two more acclaimed albums followed, Heathen and Reality, and Bowie seemed comfortable with his reassumed place in the rock firmament, as a fondly regarded visionary who took delight in being a new parent and in thrilling audiences all over again in the process.

Tragedy struck when he suffered a near-fatal heart attack on tour in 2004 and retired from music for the best part of a decade, although he was hardly a recluse: he acted in Nolan's The Prestige, sang on a Scarlett Johansson album and made guest appearances with the likes of Arcade Fire and David Gilmour.

And then he was ready to come back, which he did with 2013's triumphant The Next Day.

He never performed live again, or gave another interview, but he made teasing appearances here and there, such as when he sent Kate Moss to pick up a Brit award on his behalf and got her to deliver a pro-union message just before the Scottish independence referendum.

HE would then record and release Blackstar, one of his greatest albums, but he knew it was a last gift to his fans, as he was diagnosed with terminal cancer during its creation. In a final spurt of creativity, he co-wrote a musical, Lazarus, and even planned another, with the working title The Spectator, which was revealed to the world when the David Bowie Centre opened at V&A East in September 2025, along with thousands of other artefacts, documents and costumes.

When he died, grief-stricken fans flocked to London and New York to play his songs and comfort one other. A sign said, appropriately enough: "The Starman has returned home."

I have wanted to write about Bowie pretty much all my life, but was never sure what the right story to tell was. Finally, the answer came.

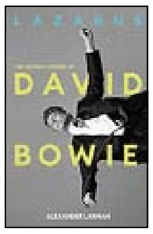
In Lazarus, I explore what it was to have been acclaimed and successful, then to struggle, and, finally, to attain a level of respect and love unmatched by other, more mundane musicians.

It is no hagiography – interviewing those who worked with him, many have some strong words and irreverent judgements about a man who always knew what he wanted – but it is, I hope, the definitive account of Bowie's later life and career.

And the best part is that, far from putting me off his music, I listen to it even more now, with renewed respect and admiration.

Starman, hero, poet – Dave from Brixton was all those things, but above all else, he was a legend, and that, I am sure, is how he would like to be remembered, a decade on.

● *Lazarus The Second Coming of David Bowie, by Alexander Larman (New Modern, £25) is out now*



2025 breaks heat records as climate change rise goes on

BY **IAN JONES**

LAST year was the UK's warmest since records began in 1884, the Met Office has confirmed.

The mean average temperature for the country across 2025 was 10.09C, beating the previous record of 10.03C set just three years earlier in 2022.

Four of the UK's top five warmest years have now occurred in the current decade, with all of the top 10 taking place in the past two decades.

Persistent spells of dry and sunny weather across the country in 2025 meant every month except January and September were warmer than average. In the six months from March to August, every month was at least 1C above the 1991-2020 average.

There were four heatwaves between June and August, and droughts were declared in several regions.

Last year was also the sunniest since records began in 1910, with a total of 1,648.5 hours of sunshine, beating the record set in 2003.

Dr Mark McCarthy, from the Met Office, said: "This very warm year is in line with expected consequences of human-induced climate change."

Heatwave in Bristol in July

FREE 2026 CALENDAR

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British Birds
2026

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CREW ALL SET

Countdown to historic Moon mission begins

BY **DEAN MURRAY**

REMARKABLE images show the giant rocket which will launch four astronauts beyond the Moon and back - and further into space than ever before.

NASA revealed the final preparations for the Artemis II mission to return humans close to the Moon for the first time in more than half a century.

This rocket launcher, generating about 8.8 million pounds of thrust at lift-off, will send the Orion spacecraft off on its voyage. The crew will loop the Moon during their 10-day adventure - and fly at least 5,700 miles beyond it.

NASA said: "The Moon is calling! Inside the vehicle assembly building at NASA Kennedy, some of the retractable platforms have been pulled away from the space launch system and Orion spacecraft, marking a major milestone on the road to launch.

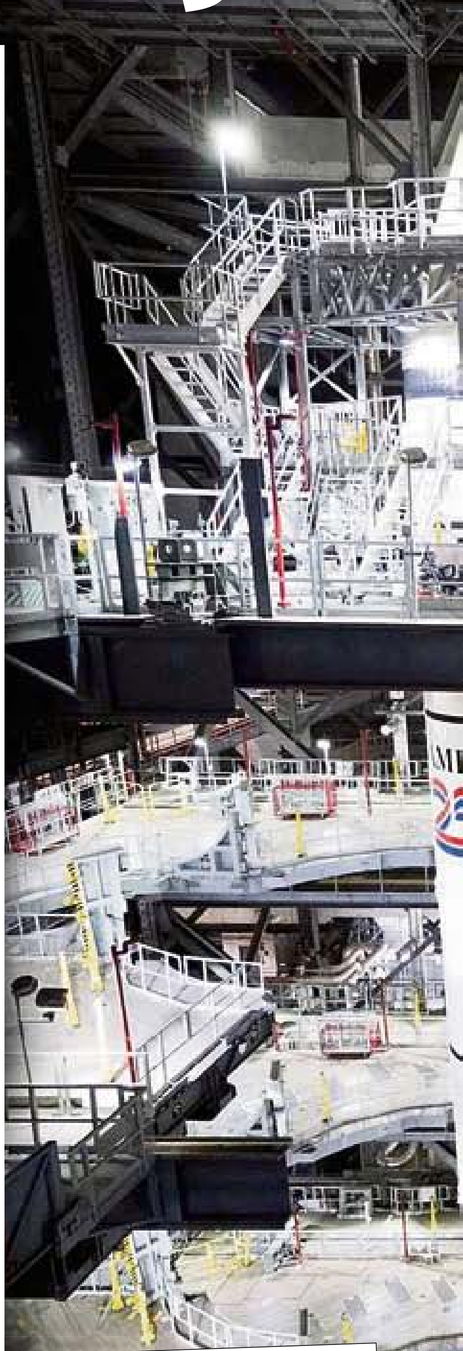
"Artemis II is one step closer to lift-off."

The space agency said the launch window could open as early as February 5 and close no later than the end of April.

Commander Reid Wiseman, 50, pilot Victor Glover, 49, and mission specialist Christina Koch, 46 - all Americans - will be joined by Canadian mission specialist Jeremy Hansen, 49, in Orion.

Just before Christmas they completed a countdown test - a timed dress rehearsal for lift-off.

Their mission is to test life-support systems, deep-space communications and navigation ready for the planned Artemis III Moon landing next year.



Victor and Reid's spacesuits are checked during countdown test

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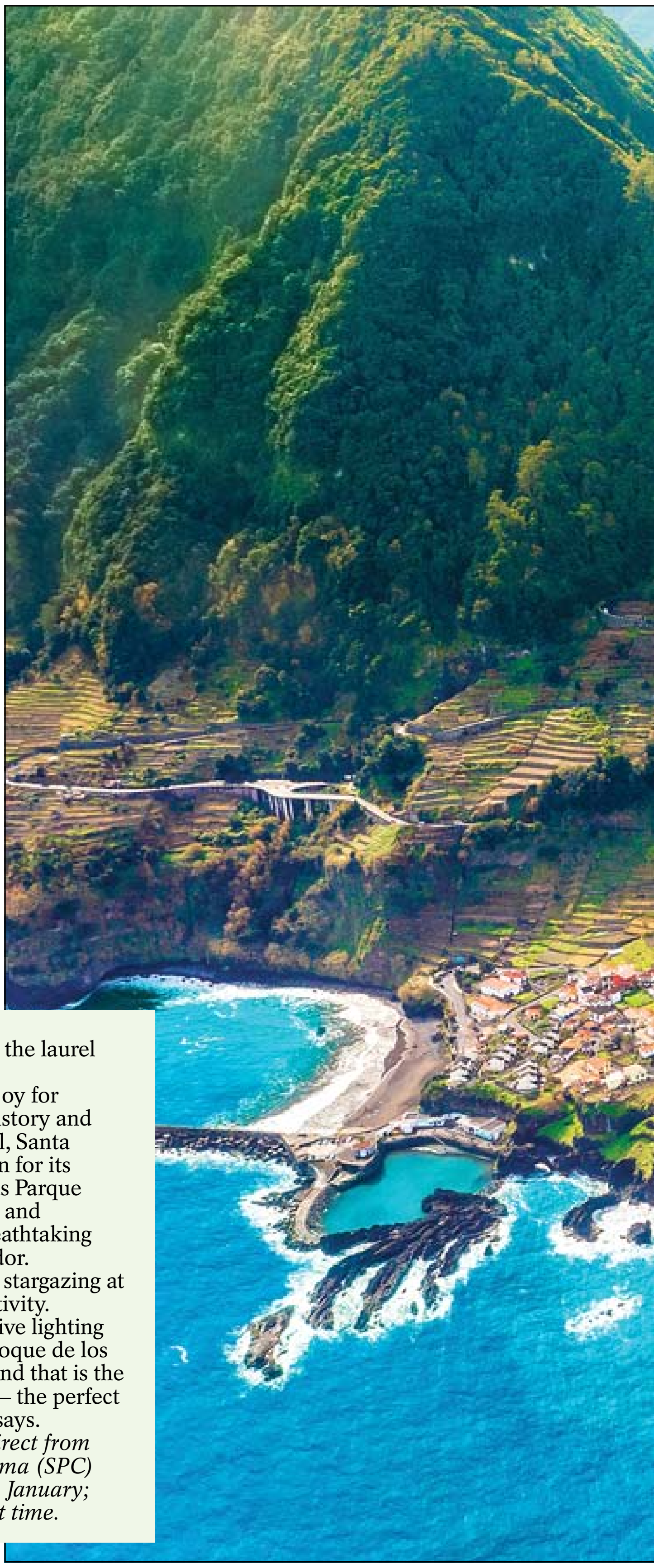
WINTER WARMERS

Beat the January blues with EMILY WRIGHT'S guide to the balmy destinations to visit in Europe, the Middle East and Africa right now

YEARNING for some sun to beat the post-Christmas blues? You're not alone. January is typically the busiest month for travel bookings as people dream of azure seas and white sand beaches to escape the cold and rain outside.

And while much of the Northern Hemisphere remains dank and dark, you don't need to necessarily book a trip to Australia or the Caribbean for some winter sun – there are many destinations worth checking out on the Continent or just beyond.

Laura Carden-Lovell, travel expert and head of operations at holiday specialists Transfer Travel, shares her ideal hotspots for warmer climes in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.



The stunning Roque de los Muchachos, found in La Palma

LA PALMA, CANARY ISLANDS, EUROPE

Average highs in January of 21/22C

The Canary Islands often top the list for Britons seeking a warm winter escape, but the majority usually flock to one of three islands – Tenerife, Lanzarote and Gran Canaria.

In reality, the choice is much broader as the Spanish archipelago is actually made up of eight islands, all of which offer something different and are just as pretty.

In fact, La Palma is often referred to as "La Isla Bonita" (The Beautiful Island) due to its jaw-dropping scenery.

"It's known for being the greenest of the Canary Islands," says Laura. "It's got forest, volcanoes and hikes through volcanic landscapes with black sandy beaches. Then you've got the walk through the Unesco Biosphere Reserve of Los Tilos that's home to the laurel forest and waterfalls."

There's also much to enjoy for holidaymakers who like history and culture. The island's capital, Santa Cruz de la Palma, is known for its archaeological sites such as Parque Arqueológico de Belmaco and churches including the breathtaking Iglesia Matriz de El Salvador.

Laura also recommends stargazing at the beach as a must-do activity.

"La Palma has a restrictive lighting policy in place, with the Roque de los Muchachos – a rocky mound that is the highest point of La Palma – the perfect place for stargazing," she says.

● *How to get there: Fly direct from Gatwick (LGW) to La Palma (SPC) return with TUI for £67 in January; four-hour, 25-minute flight time.*

MUSCAT, OMAN, MIDDLE EAST

Average highs in January of 25C

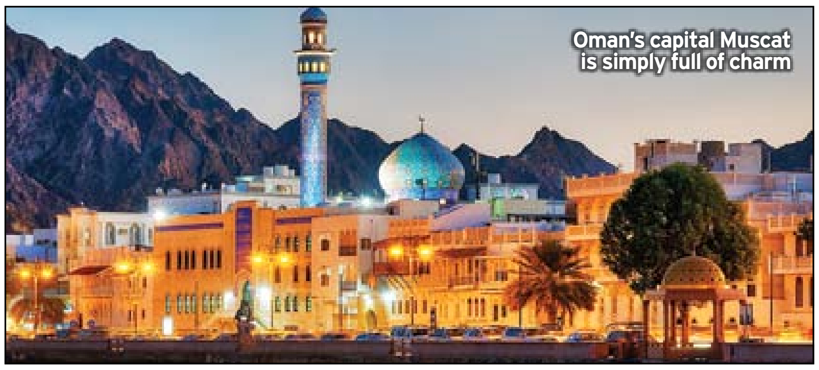
While Dubai and Abu Dhabi often top the list of countries to visit in the Middle East, Oman's capital, Muscat, has held on to its traditions and charm. Situated on the Gulf of Oman where the water is crystal clear, the city is surrounded by mountains and desert landscapes and is a mix of majestic mosques and high-rises with upmarket shopping.

The city's ancient port dates back to the first century AD. Muscat was ruled by the Persians, and later the Portuguese from 1507 to 1650 – the Portuguese forts Al Jalali and Mirani still loom over Muscat today.

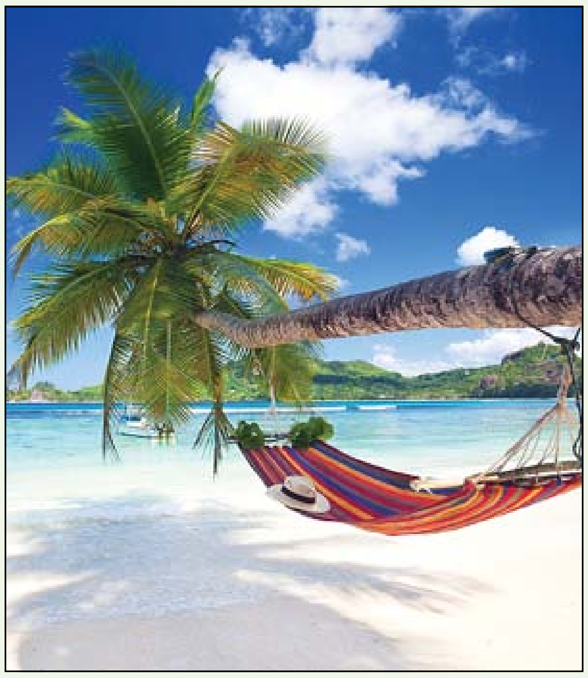
Laura recommends a boat tour navigating the Daymaniyat Islands.

The nine isles are home to vibrant coral reefs and marine life. "A five-hour excursion only costs about £5 to £7 and has crystal clear waters, which is always a plus," says Laura.

● *How to get there: Fly direct from Heathrow (LHR) to Muscat International Airport (MCT) with Oman Air return for £482 in January; seven-hour flight time.*



Oman's capital Muscat is simply full of charm



A tropical paradise beach awaits in the stunning Seychelles

SEYCHELLES, EAST AFRICA

Average highs in January of 29c

If you don't mind a long travel day, the East African archipelago of the Seychelles is a guaranteed winter sun destination. Known for its beautiful beaches like the Anse Lazio, Anse Intendance or Anse Source d'Argent, the Seychelles is made up of 115 idyllic islands scattered across the Indian Ocean.

"For those wanting to hike, there are various trek trails in the Morne Seychellois National Park found on the island of Mahé," says Laura. "For even more wildlife and nature, you can visit the Vallée de Mai National Park on Praslin, where you may spot the local black parrot, or take a boat trip to Curieuse Island to see giant tortoises."

Elsewhere, the capital and largest city of the Seychelles, Victoria, offers museums, beautiful architecture, and local culture in abundance. Laura suggests visiting the local market to enjoy traditional Creole dishes.

● *How to get there: Fly from Gatwick (LGW) with a stop in Addis Ababa (ADD) to Seychelles International Airport (SEZ) in Mahé return with Ethiopian Airlines for £463 in January; 14-hour flight time.*

MADEIRA, PORTUGAL, EUROPE

Average highs in January of 19C

Tucked away in the North Atlantic, some 250 miles north of the Canary Islands, lies the Portuguese archipelago of Madeira.

"Madeira is known for being the Island of Eternal Spring thanks to its consistent mild climate and year-round pleasant temperatures," says Laura.

The island's microclimate supports lush, green landscapes and bountiful flowers.

Visitors can enjoy this landscape on one of Madeira's walking trails, with over 1,350 miles to choose from across the archipelago.

Holidaymakers can also enjoy unique experiences such as The Monte Toboggan Ride in one of the hand-made wicker basket sledges. One of the island's most famous attractions, the unforgettable experience sees drivers called "carreiros" push the sledges two kilometres through the parish village of Monte, using their boots with thick rubber soles as brakes to control the speed. It's a thrilling ride and offers stunning panoramic views of Funchal, the island's capital.

Meanwhile, Laura also recommends swimming in one of Madeira's natural pools formed by volcanic rocks, including Porto Moniz and Doca do Cavacas.

● *How to get there: Fly direct from Gatwick (LGW) to Madeira Airport (FNC) return with easyJet for £127 in January; four-hour flight time.*

Land meets ocean in the stunning Seixal region of Madeira

DJERBA, TUNISIA, NORTH AFRICA

Average highs in January of 16C

The Tunisian island of Djerba, celebrated for its Mediterranean beaches and whitewashed desert towns, is a fantastic option for travellers seeking sunshine closer to home.

Legend has it that the island is "the land of the lotus-eaters", referenced in Homer's Odyssey. The tale goes that shipwrecked warriors became so addicted to the local delicacy of lotus flowers that they abandoned all thoughts of returning home.

While the eight miles of sand deserve a spotlight, the unpolished towns like the capital, Houmt Souk, must never be overlooked by visitors.

Here, you can explore cobblestone alleys and sun-drenched squares, while further inland visitors can discover fruit orchards among quaint rural villages.

Sidi Mahrez is Djerba Island's headline beach. It runs from Taguermess Lighthouse in the east all the way to Flamingo Point in the north, where pink-feathered visitors congregate in February each year.

● *How to get there: Fly direct from Luton (LTN) to Djerba-Zarzis International Airport (DJE) return with easyJet for just £88 in January; three-hour 20-minute flight time.*

A typical street scene found in Houmt Souk, capital of the island of Djerba

AGADIR, MOROCCO, NORTH AFRICA

Average highs in January of 21C

Africa's Mediterranean coast is dotted with beautiful resorts such as Agadir, located about a three-hour car ride south west of Marrakech.

The Moroccan coastal resort boasts a wide crescent beach and an impressive seaside promenade lined with lively cafes, restaurants and bars.

"Agadir has got golden beaches and all-inclusive resorts that are perfect for older travellers or families," says Laura.

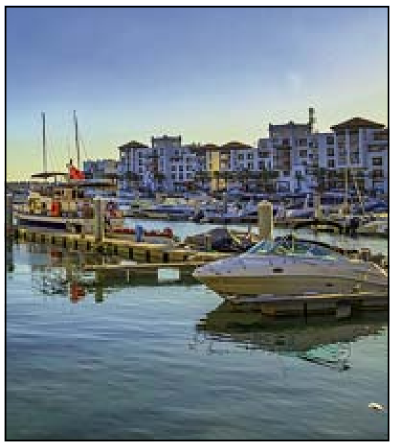
"The city has many beautiful mosques to explore, like the Mohammed V Mosque and even a free-admission animal park, The Valley of the Birds, which is an easy walk into the town to spot some exotic and local species."

Visitors cannot leave without sampling the mint tea for which the region is famous.

The beverage can be enjoyed in one of the many traditional cafes dotted around the city. Agadir also boasts one of Africa's largest urban markets, Souk El Had, with 3,000 shops spanning 13 hectares.

Shoppers are guaranteed to grab bargains here, says Laura.

● *How to get there: Fly direct from Gatwick (LGW) to Agadir (AGA) return with easyJet, for just £80 in January; three-hour 40-minute flight time.*



Agadir marina is full of yachts at sunset

CAPE VERDE, WEST AFRICA

Average highs in January of 25C

Just off Africa's west coast lies the island country of Cape Verde, with 10 volcanic islands, including Sal and Santiago.

"Being an archipelago, there are miles of soft sandy beaches to be found on Cape Verde that are perfect for swimming and for soaking up the winter sun," says Laura. "Some of the most well-known are Santa Maria on Sal, and Tarrafal Beach on Santiago."

You can take a guided tour to Sal's salt flats and volcanic crater, visit Santa Maria's colourful pier or take a short dune-buggy trip on Boa Vista's desert-like sands.

Nature-lovers should visit the islands of Maio and Sao Vicente, which provide fantastic opportunities to spot baby sea turtles hatching between November and January. And for the more adventurous, there is horseback riding along the beaches or through the hills.

● *How to get there: Fly direct from Gatwick (LGW) to Sal Island (SID) return with easyJet for £244 in January; six-hour flight time.*

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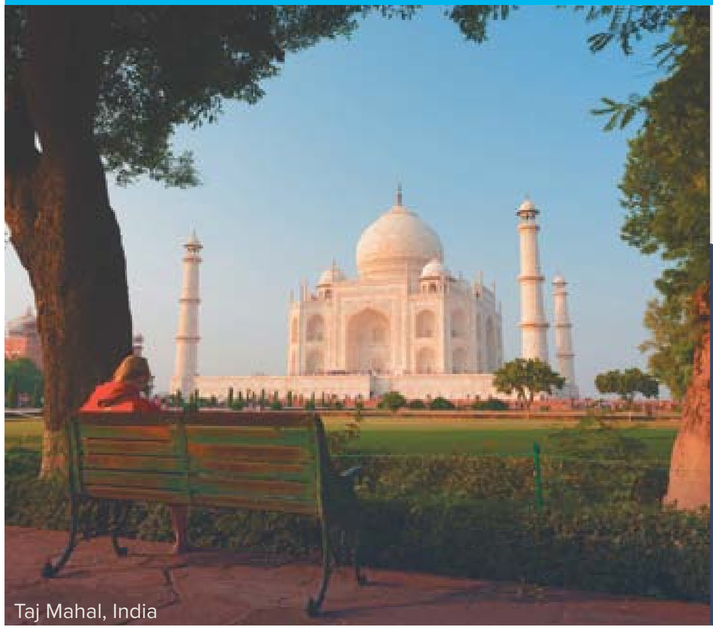

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What's your tipple?

by Matt Nixson

1

2

3

4

5

6

Enjoy some big whites out in 2026

WHITE wine isn't especially fashionable. There's no industry buzz as there has been around, for instance, rosé or English sparkling wines in recent years.

But it remains a go-to favourite of so many wine lovers – no surprise given the breadth of grapes, styles and characteristics on offer from all over the world. One of my New Year's resolutions is to enjoy more whites so I thought I'd kick off 2026 with some suggestions.

There's a bit of a bias here towards South African wines, but the country has consistently punched above its weight and the Western Cape climate is ideal for the likes of pinot, chenin blanc (South Africa's most widely planted grape, making it the world's largest producer by a long way), sauvignon blanc and chardonnay. South Africa had a tough pandemic and the country is still suffering from the fallout of apartheid and also from political corruption and violence.

But it makes amazing wine and we can support producers this year by raising a glass of South African white.

SIX GREAT WHITES FOR THIS YEAR

1 Graham Beck Blanc de Blancs 2019 (£22, 12.5%)
Another winner from the Western Cape, this sparkling chardonnay by esteemed producer Graham Beck is a jolly Champagne alternative or just fun fizz. Notes of apple, lime and brioche abound with plenty of tingly bubbles and a fabulously medium-bodied finish. Definitely a thumbs up from me. Available from Majestic.

2 Zalze Sauvignon Blanc 2025 (£6.65, 12%)
Currently on sale, down from a tenner and a total steal, this lively, aromatic white from South Africa boasts plenty of tropical flavours wrapped up in a bright acidity and medium finish. Another bone dry white with lovely colours and great taste. Available from Waitrose.

3 Weather Station Sauvignon Blanc 2024 (£13.50, 13.5%)
This 100% sauvignon blanc from the famed South African producer Journey's End is a banker. Medium-bodied, dry and with plenty of pear, lime and tropical fruit on the palate and a smooth, ripely acidic finish, it's incredibly moreish. One sip and you're hooked! Available from Ocado.

4 Esporao Reserva White 2023 (from £16.95, 14%)
This stunning Portuguese blend is medium bodied, dry and has a gentle acidic finish and subtle floral notes that thrill the palate. Apricot, orange and just a hint of oak make this a must-try if you fancy something a bit different from the more typical Portuguese reds. Available from Cheers Wine Merchants, Macknades Fine Foods and Field & Fawcett.

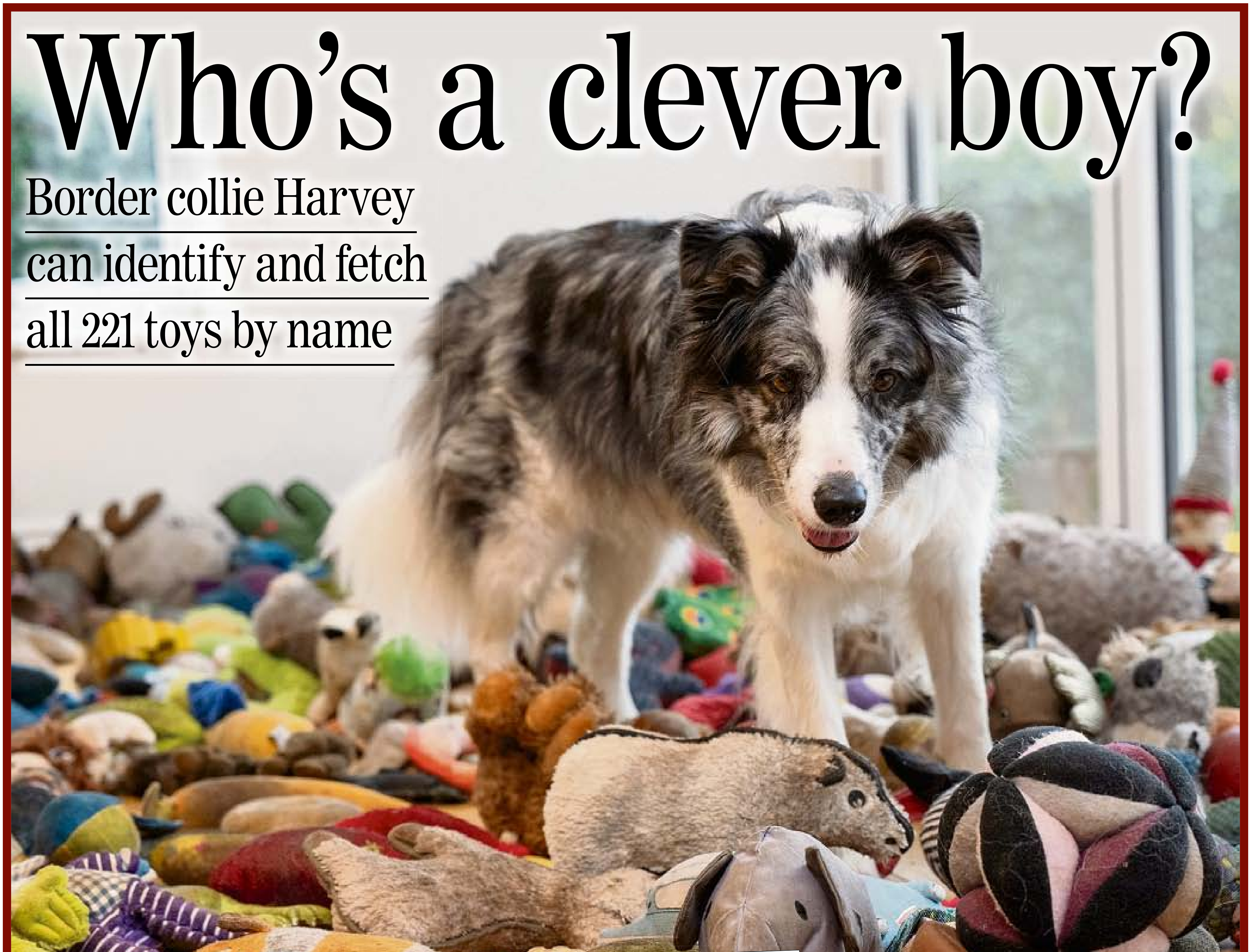
5 White Pinot 2020 (£24.50, 12%)
A rich straw colour in the glass signals the deliciously crisp, medium-bodied and dryish wine to follow from the Surrey producer. Apple, pear and stone fruit flavours tantalise the palate with a slightly creamy finish. A delicious treat. Available from Denbies.

6 Mount Rozier Chenin Blanc Reserve 2024 (£7.50, 11%)
This great value chenin blanc from South Africa is perfect if you like your white bone dry and tinglingly acidic. Plenty of apple and pear on the palate and notes of lime with a lovely, well-rounded finish. Available from Sainsbury's.

Share your own drink-related tips with matt.nixson@reachplc.com

Who’s a clever boy?

Border collie Harvey can identify and fetch all 221 toys by name



BY **ISOBEL WILLIAMS**

MEET Harvey – “Britain’s brightest dog” – who can fetch more than 200 toys by their names.

The clever canine learns to bring an item by touching it a few times, taking it into his mouth, and then finding it from several locations until he understands what it is called.

Owner Irene Hewlett, 52, started by teaching the seven-year-old border collie the name of one item, Little Lamb. Now Harvey has just learned his 221st – Larry the Leek.

The amazing talent has earned Harvey the title of “Britain’s brightest dog” and he has been accepted into two studies for “genius” dogs in Budapest and Portsmouth.

Irene, of Reading, said: “He picks new toys up in about five minutes now. This is what we do all day, every day. Border collies are working dogs, so need a job, and this is his. He wants to play this every second. We do it because we love it.”

Irene had read a book on a US dog called Chaser, who learned the names of 1,022 objects after being taught by academics, and decided she wanted to do the same. Irene added: “Harvey came and we started the game straight away. He didn’t immediately retrieve, so we had to teach him that first.

“When we introduced a second toy, he looked at me with no idea what to do. But we persevered.

“After the third he was confused again, and I thought ‘this is going to take a really long time’.

“And then we got to four and it was like it clicked. Once he understood we just kept going and never looked back. He is a very good dog, very calm.” Harvey sometimes gets confused with names that start with similar sounds such as Postbox and Polar Bear, but he will work it out based on mouth feel.

Now, Irene, originally from Amsterdam, says the biggest challenge is to find different toys.

So some have Dutch names so that similar toys can be used.

Irene said: “I would love to see if I could train another dog the way I trained Harvey, but I am a one-dog person.”

Harvey, main, and Irene Hewlett with her brainy border collie and their toy collection

30-SECOND CHALLENGE

JUST follow the instructions from left to right, starting with the number given to reach an answer at the end of the row. Set your own 30-second challenge. For the very young or arithmetically rusty, you have 30 seconds for the BEGINNER task.

For a greater challenge, try BEGINNER and INTERMEDIATE in 30 seconds. True mental gymnasts should try INTERMEDIATE and ADVANCED in 30 seconds together.

Today's answers can be found on page 43

										YOUR ANSWERS
Beginner	35	÷7	+4	SQUARE IT	+9	60% OF THIS	-6	÷6	+69	
Intermediate	8	x12	+114	80% OF THIS	+176	7/8 OF THIS	-49	4/9 OF THIS	-38	
Advanced	859	-163	2/3 OF THIS	+16	INCREASE BY 70%	-78	8/41 OF THIS	+384	2/3 OF THIS	

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

FRIDAY, JANUARY 2

EUROMILLIONS

8 27 42 44 46 1 10

THUNDERBALL

4 12 18 19 32 9

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1

SET FOR LIFE 7 8 41 43 45 10

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31

LOTTERY 3 20 27 29 38 46 14

THUNDERBALL 15 18 20 23 27 8

THE HEALTH LOTTERY

FRIDAY, JANUARY 2

20 25 37 41 48 43

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1

7 11 24 46 49 10

The Health Lottery has raised more than £135m for health-related causes since 2011. Details at thehealthlotteryfoundation.org.uk

PHONE POLL RESULTS

We asked in our poll on Thursday:

Will 2026 be the year when assisted dying is legalised?

YES: 75%

NO: 25%

DO YOU HAVE A STORY OR A PHOTO?

If you have a story:
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or email:
expressnews@reachplc.com

If you have a photo:
020 8612 7171
or email:
expresspix@express.co.uk

For general inquiries:
020 8612 7000

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SUDOKU

Fill in all the squares so that each row, each column, and each 3x3 square contain all the digits from 1 to 9

9		5	4			2	1	
	7			6		5		4
		4	8		5			
3		2		5			6	
	9		3		2			5
	4			7		3		2
7					6	4	5	
		9		1			2	
	1	6			8		3	7

This is the Quick Sudoku for the solver in a hurry.
For today's solution call:

09071 812 571

(Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge)

For extra clues call:

09013 225 602

(Calls cost 75p plus your telephone company's network access charge)

MORE PUZZLES – P42-43 and PULLOUT

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

5	6	4	8	3	1	9	7	2
3	1	2	9	4	7	6	8	5
9	7	8	6	2	5	3	1	4
6	9	7	5	1	2	8	4	3
8	2	3	7	6	4	5	9	1
1	4	5	3	9	8	2	6	7
2	8	1	4	5	9	7	3	6
4	3	9	2	7	6	1	5	8
7	5	6	1	8	3	4	2	9

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w/PORT TASTING TOUR

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- Including Port Tasting Tour.

*Dates From: JAN'26, FEB'26 & MAR'26 £149 APR'26 £169 | MAY'26, JUN'26 & JUL'26 £199 AUG'26, SEP'26 & OCT'26 £259.

3* VENICE
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- Including Gondola Ride.

*Dates From: FEB'26 & MAR'26 £169 JAN'26 £199 | APR'26, JUN'26 & OCT'26 £259 MAY'26, JUL'26, AUG'26 & SEP'26 £299.

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5* MADEIRA
STUNNING VIEWS

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- Longer stays also available

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T & C's: Calls cost 5pm from a BT landline. You may also be charged a connection fee. Mobile and other providers' charges may vary. Monday - Friday 8am - 10pm, Saturday and Sunday 8am - 9pm. Prices are per person, based on two people sharing, and are subject to availability. Flights based on London departures, regional departures available at a supplement. excludes all extras such baggage and transfers unless stated. Excludes school/peak holiday. The star ratings that are shown are the tour operators own. Different countries have different standards; so a three star hotel in one country may not be the equivalent to another country. City tax may be payable in resort. DCC and CCC 0% charge, Amex Card Charges 0%. Image might not reflect actual holiday experience. Amendment and Cancellation charges may apply. Holidays are operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Best Online Holidays, TTA Q6238 ATOL 12016 protected.

12016 ATOL PROTECTED

Easter goodies on display on New Year's Day at a Co-op store in West Sussex

Easter? We've still got the Christmas decorations up!

BY **CHRIS RICHES**

BAFFLED shoppers have hit out after spotting Easter eggs on the shelves of major supermarkets.

Chocolate eggs and bunnies appeared as early as Christmas Eve at a Poundland in Norwich, 103 days ahead of Easter Sunday.

The April sweet treats were also spotted at the Co-op, at Iceland and in Morrisons.

Customers have branded it an example of "brazen consumerism". Sue Rose, 71, said of the Poundland eggs: "It's ridiculous and spoils it for children, especially because it makes it less special if they are available this soon. I mean, Christmas has only just gone."

Simon Dade, 69, agreed that "it's way too early" and Michelle Holligan, 52, said it is "just silly".

It was a similar story last year, when supermarkets including Morrisons, Tesco and Asda riled shoppers when the eggs went on sale before the New Year.

Yesterday a Poundland spokesman said: "Some stores are giving a sneak peek into what's coming in 2026. To be honest, it's never too early for a Creme Egg."

The Saturday briefing

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER by CAROLINE FORD

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Is there anything you're yearning to know? Send your questions, on any subject, to the contacts given below, and we will do our best to answer them...

ALL AT SEA: Bill Nighy portrays Davy Jones in Pirates Of The Carribean and, below, Greta Garbo

Q Can you tell me the origins of the maritime saying, "he's gone down to Davy Jones' Locker" when a ship has sunk or someone has drowned.

Philip Engelen, Cape Town, South Africa

A Davy Jones' Locker is a term shrouded in mystery. A staple of maritime folklore, some suggest it emerged in the 18th century – others trace it back much further.

Early seafarers believed Davy Jones was a malevolent spirit of the seas whose appearance is said to foretell storms and shipwrecks.

His locker is the bottom of the ocean, where he keeps sunken ships and is the final resting place of sailors who perish at sea.

Stories of Davy Jones spread across ports and ships, serving as cautionary tales and explanations for unexplained losses. One theory connects the name to the biblical prophet Jonah, who was cast overboard by sailors, causing the storm to abate. Jones may be an alteration of Jonah – sailor slang for a person who brought bad luck.

Davy has also been linked to St. David, the patron saint of Wales, with Jones being a common Welsh surname. In this legend, Davy Jones only protects good sailors, while immoral ones are sent to the locker. It has also been suggested "Davy" is a corruption of the West Indian word Duppy – widely used in Caribbean folklore for a ghost or malevolent spirit.

The earliest known literary reference to Davy Jones and his locker is in Daniel Defoe's The Four Years Voyages of Capt. George Roberts in 1726. The Pirates Of The Caribbean film series features Davy Jones, played by Bill Nighy, as the archenemy of Jack Sparrow. Here, he is portrayed as a complex character with a tragic back story.

Today Davy Jones' Locker is used metaphorically to describe any final destination and reflects our fascination with an afterlife.

Q When were the first television advertisements screened and what were they for?

Linda Campbell, Reading

A Film advertising goes back to the earliest days of filmmaking in the 19th century and an advert for Bryant & May matches, in 1896, is considered to be the first commercial film shown in Europe.

A variety of adverts played in cinemas until the 1940s and 50s, when many sponsors moved to television. The first paid TV advert was for Bulova watches and it was screened in the US in 1941.

Advertising on TV in the UK began on September 22, 1955, at the launch of ITV, with an advert for Gibbs SR toothpaste. All it featured was a block of ice, a tube of toothpaste and a voiceover about its "tingling fresh" qualities – and not many people saw it.

The first colour TV commercial was for Birds Eye peas in 1969.

Some big names in Hollywood began their careers in commercials. In 1920, 15-year-old Greta Garbo made her first screen appearance in an advert for a department store in Stockholm, where she worked.

James Dean made his television debut at 19, in an ad for Pepsi-Cola in 1950. Other stars who got their first break on TV include Sharon Stone in an advert for Finesse Shampoo in 1983 and Brad Pitt in a 1989 Pringles advert.

Q I live near Barrow-in-Furness and recently travelled to Somerset, where there is a village called Barrow Gurney. Can you tell me what the origin of Barrow is?

Edith Pritchard, Ulverston, Cumbria

A Other than Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria, there are towns and villages across the country with Barrow in the title, such as Barrow upon Trent in Derbyshire, Lincolnshire's Barrow upon Humber and Barrow upon Soar in Leicestershire. There are also lots of villages called Barrow, such as in Cheshire, Shropshire and Suffolk.

The source of a specific place name can depend on its location and history and the etymology isn't always clear. Barrow-in-Furness has a rich Viking heritage and the name in this instance may come from the Old Norse "barrai" – meaning either "bare island" or "island off the headland".

Other etymologies suggest "barrow" is partly of Celtic origin, with "barr" meaning "peak" or "promontory" joining with "ey" from the Norse for island.

Barrow can mean a mound or hill (Barrowby, Lincolnshire) or a wood or grove of trees (Barrow cum Denham, Suffolk).

Barrow Gurney in Somerset was known as Berwe (woodland grove) in the Domesday Book of 1086 but it is also in an area dotted with Bronze Age burial mounds.

PLEASE SEND US YOUR INTRIGUING QUESTIONS ON ANY SUBJECT:

- **By email:** put "questions" in the subject line and send to caroline.ford@reachplc.com
- **By post:** to Any Questions, Daily Express, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AP
- **Unfortunately we cannot reply individually, but we will feature the best questions on this page.**

forgotten verse

PATRICIA Hill from Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, asks to be reminded of a poem about the power of imagination. It tells the tale of a city-dwelling woman who is briefly transported into a rural vision of hills, rivers and her beloved cottage by the sound of a thrush's song.

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years:
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment: what ails her? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail;
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven: but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade;
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colours have all passed away from her eyes!

If you can't remember the words to a favourite verse or song from yesteryear, send us a snippet and we'll do our best to find all the wonderful words.

BEACHCOMBER 109 YEARS OLD AND STILL LOOKING FORWARDS...

HAPPY New Year! Or is it? Here are my 2026 predictions, based on a mixture of science, astrology, probability theory and hunch.

January: Donald Trump declares peace in the Ukraine. Moscow heavily bombs Kiev. Trump adds the words "in a few days" to his statement. This prediction is expected to repeat for every month of the year.

February: The BBC counter-sues the US President for 3.7 billion pounds for his derogatory comments about the Panorama programme in his lawsuit against them.

March: US bridge players are alarmed at reports of a forthcoming presidential decree banning no-trump contracts.

April: Shares in American precious stone merchants, shovel manufacturers, cudgel makers and organ transplant specialists boom as diamonds, spades, clubs and hearts increase in value and no-trump contracts plummet.

May: Donald Trump scores a surprise win in the Eurovision Song Contest. He points out that even his name is musical as the sum of the alphabetical positions of the letters in "Trump" is 88, which is the number of keys on a pianoforte.

June: The US President claims victory in the World Snooker Championship, claiming Judd Trump is fake news and a hoax

July: The Eurovision result is challenged by allegations of three billion phone calls from the White House.

August: US voters protest at the size of the White House phone bill. A spokesperson says it will be covered by the suit against the BBC.

September: AI is used to generate a proposal to end wars, drugs and conflicts.

October: The US and Bulgaria agree a deal involving the import of sand from the Golden Sands resort to get the right colour for the hair and skin in a sculpture of Donald Trump at Mount Rushmore.

November: Donald Trump offers to drop his £3.7 billion law suit against the BBC in exchange for a knighthood and peerage. Some say this is motivated by his noticing the BBC licence fee raised £3.6 billion last year, so they probably can't afford it.

December: Following the removal of the title from the Andrew formerly known as Prince, the Royal Appellation Committee decides to remove the Duke from Duke Ellington, the Count from Count Basie, the title from Screaming Lord Sutch and the Viscount from all biscuits bearing that title.

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Lives remembered

Daily Express obituaries, every Saturday

God created the perfect screen icon

Brigitte Bardot

Actress

BORN SEPTEMBER 28, 1934 – DIED DECEMBER 28, 2025, AGED 91

SHE WAS the original "sex kitten" but French actress, singer and global sex symbol Brigitte Bardot turned her back on all that glitz and glamour to become a fervent animal rights activist.

Born to a wealthy family in Paris, as a child she wanted to become a ballerina. Discovered in her teens after posing on the cover of Elle magazine, she started an acting career aged 18 in 1952, much against her strict Catholic parents' wishes.

However Bardot's grandfather was supportive, saying, "If this little girl is to become a whore, cinema will not be the cause".

Four short years later she shot to worldwide fame in the 1956 film And God Created Woman, written and directed by her then-husband Roger Vadim, in which she played a sexually liberated woman.

The film caused a scandal in America and was banned in some states, but French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir hailed BB, as she was known in France, as an icon of "absolute freedom".

By the time she stepped back from the silver screen at 39, she had 50 films under her belt, including Plucking The Daisy and The Bride Is Much Too Beautiful, and was considered an icon of the 1960s sexual revolution.

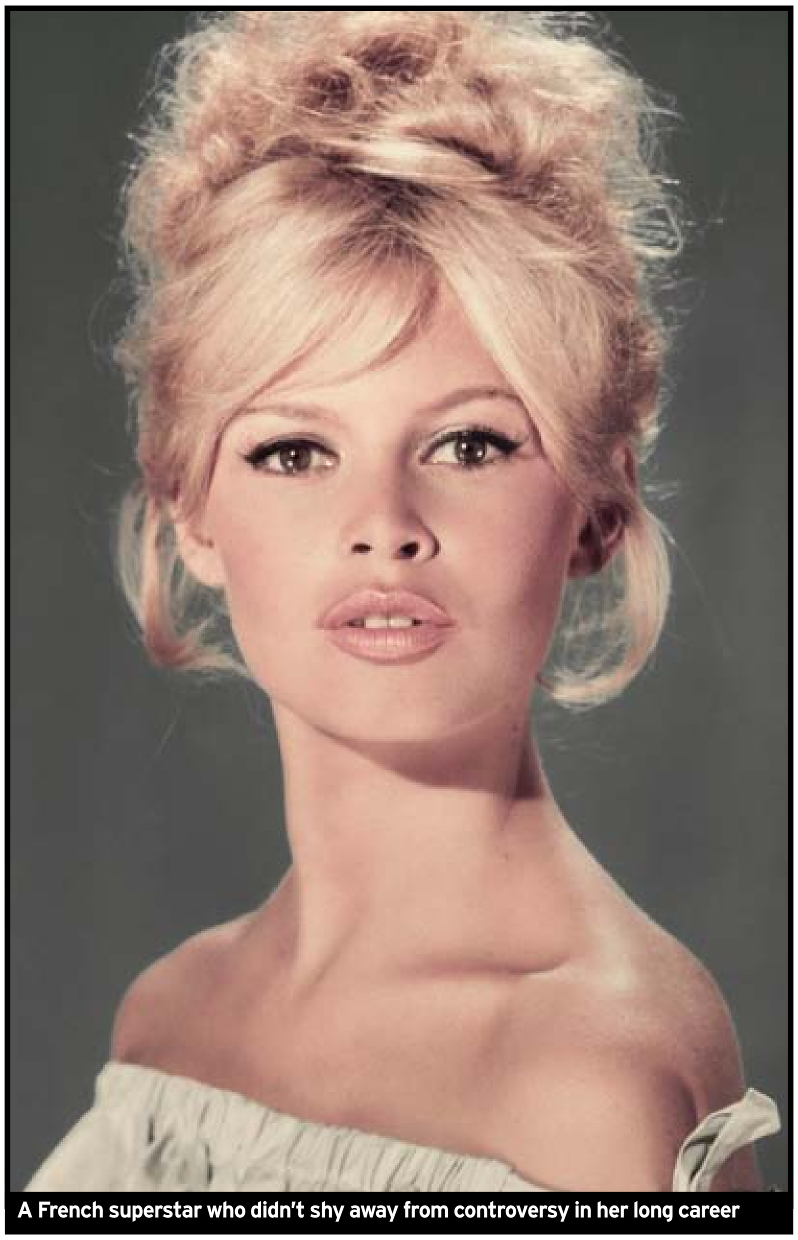
Announcing her retirement from the film industry to focus on animal rights, she said: "I gave my youth and beauty to men, I give my wisdom and experience to animals."

The star then devoted the rest of her working life to campaigning for animal welfare as part of her Brigitte Bardot Foundation.

However, much later on, Bardot's reputation was tarnished because of her far-right views after she made homophobic slurs and was fined a few times for inciting racial hatred.

She courted further controversy for her perceived dismissal of the #MeToo movement.

Bardot was married four times with her final marriage to Bernard d'Ormale, whom she wed in 1992, lasting longer than her other marriages combined, until her death. She had one son Nicolas, born in 1960, from her second marriage to actor Jacques Charrier.



A French superstar who didn't shy away from controversy in her long career

She is reported to have attempted suicide after his birth saying she had never wanted to be a mother.

The pair became estranged with Bardot writing in her memoir: "I'm not made to be a mother. I'm just not adult enough to take care of a child." In October last year, Bardot was admitted to hospital to undergo surgery "as part of the treatment for a serious illness".

She died at her home La Madrague in Saint-Tropez, France.

She leaves behind Nicolas, her two granddaughters and three great grandchildren, based in Norway, who she rarely saw.

Ruth Bourne

Codebreaker

BORN JUNE 2, 1926 – DIED DECEMBER 17, 2025, AGED 99

BOURNE was 17 and a trainee member of the Women's Royal Naval Service when she joined the other women of Bletchley Park to work on Alan Turing's Bombe machine.

This was an electromechanical device built to crack Germany's Enigma code, quickly finding daily settings to decode enemy messages – a technological breakthrough that changed the course of the war and saved millions of lives.

Born in Manchester and raised in Birmingham, the Jewish codebreaker said she gained "a little bit of personal satisfaction" from her role in anti-Nazi operations.

She was awarded the Légion d'honneur, France's highest military honour, and later volunteered at Bletchley Park giving tours.

Player 'a Picasso of the game'

John Robertson

Footballer

BORN JANUARY 20, 1953 - DIED DECEMBER 25, 2025, AGED 72

NEVER one to mince his words, Nottingham Forest manager Brian Clough described John Robertson as "a very unattractive young man, scruffy and unfit.

"If one day, I felt a bit off-colour, I would sit next to him. I was bloody Errol Flynn in comparison. But give him a ball and a yard of grass, and he was an artist, the Picasso of our game."

The tricky winger provided the assisting cross for Trevor Francis to score the only goal when Nottingham Forest won the 1979 European Cup final.

A year later he scored in the final when Forest retained the European Cup against Hamburg.

At Forest he won promotion from the 1976-77 Football League Second Division, the 1977–78 Football League First Division, the UEFA Super Cup, two Football League Cups, the 1978 FA Charity Shield and the Anglo-Scottish Cup.

He was voted first place in a 2015 poll of favourite all-time Nottingham Forest players.

Robertson a star on and off the pitch

Scouted by the club aged 15 having just finished school, he took on a job as a messenger boy at a printing firm until he was signed as a full-time professional, making his debut at 17 in 1970. Robertson also played for Scotland, scoring the winning goal against England in 1981 and against New Zealand in the 1982 FIFA World Cup.

He then moved into coaching, acting as an assistant to his former Nottingham Forest teammate Martin O'Neill at Wycombe Wanderers, Norwich City, Leicester City, Celtic, Aston Villa and Grantham Town FC.

He had supported Rangers as a boy but described his time at rivals Celtic as assistant to O'Neill as "the best years of his life in football".

Robertson's daughter Jessica was born in 1983 with cerebral palsy, which left her quadriplegic and unable to speak. She died in 1996.

Robertson and former wife Sally sued the hospital claiming they had caused Jessica's brain damage by delaying a caesarean but lost their High Court case.

In his final years Robertson was diagnosed with Parkinson's. He is survived by second wife, Sharyl, children, Andrew and Mark, daughter Liz, from his first marriage and two granddaughters, Jess and Phoebe.

Perry Bamonte

Musician

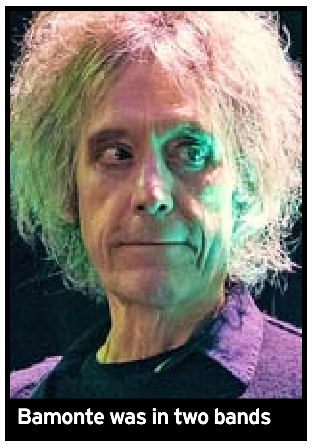
BORN SEPTEMBER 3, 1960 – DIED DECEMBER 24, 2025, AGED 65

HE WAS the roadie turned rock star with Indie Goth rock band The Cure.

Born in London, one of five children, he was known as Teddy growing up. Younger brother Daryl worked as a tour manager for The Cure and Depeche Mode and, via this connection, Perry joined The Cure's road crew in 1984.

He worked his way up to become the guitar technician and personal assistant to the band's enigmatic lead singer Robert Smith.

Already a guitarist, Bamonte was taught to play piano and keyboards by Smith's sister Janet and when keyboardist Roger O'Donnell left in 1990, Bamonte was promoted to a full-time member of the band, playing keyboards, guitar, six-string bass and occasionally percussion.



Bamonte was in two bands

His first album with The Cure was Wish in 1992, and he remained with the band for their next three albums.

He performed more than 400 shows over 14 years with the band.

After leaving when Smith decided he wanted the band to be a three-piece, he rejoined in 2022, playing another 90 shows, some of the best in the band's history.

The Cure then scored their first No.1 album in 32 years Songs Of A Lost World in 2024.

Balmonte was also the bassist for rock supergroup Love Amongst Ruin.

Away from music he devoted his time to fly-fishing and had a career as an illustrator, contributing to the magazine Fly Culture.

Bamonte was due to tour with The Cure this year, but died after a short illness at home, according to the band who added that he would be "very greatly missed."

He is survived by his parents, his wife Donna, and two of his siblings, Carla and Daryl Bamonte.

Written by KAREN ROCKETT

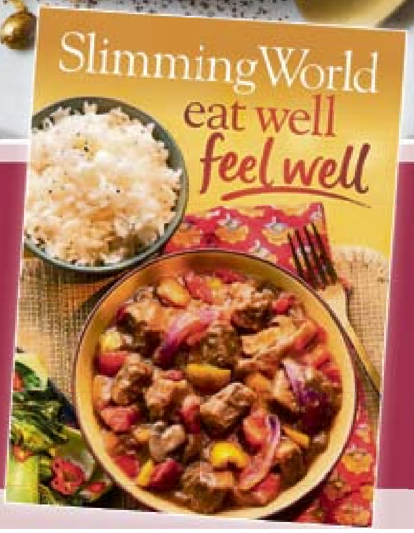
FREE HEALTHY EATING RECIPE MAGAZINE

24-PAGE GLOSSY MAG

Weight loss inspiration to help you start eating well and feeling great

INSIDE TOMORROW'S

SUNDAY EXPRESS


Slimming World
eat well
feel well

TELEPHONE
UNLUCKY
100% BONUS
300% BONUS
1000% BONUS
200% BONUS
100% BONUS
SPIN AGAIN
500% BONUS
300% BONUS
SPIN
UNDERGROUND
29

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Puzzled?

PROBLEMS TO TEST YOUR BRAIN POWER

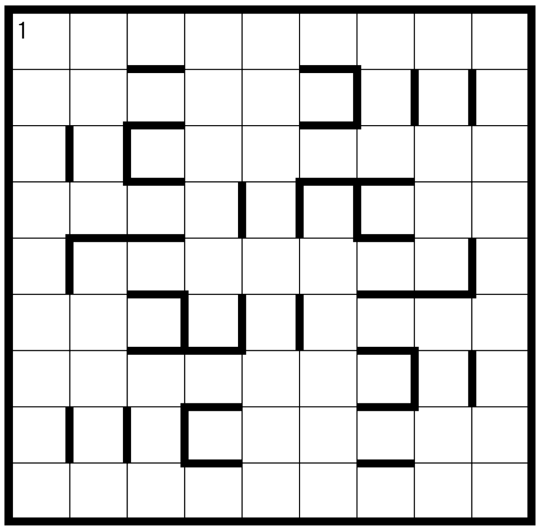
MAKE YOU VERY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Most attractive (9)
Puzzle-solving aid (4)
Code word for the letter U (7)
Water barrier (3)
Adhesive dressing for wounds (7)
Plant part (4)
Smashed (6)
Be made up of (7)
Subatomic particles (9)
Spike _, film director (3)
Comment (6)

DOWN

1 Process or method (9)
Torn strap (anag.) (9)
Frozen water (3)
Menaces (9)
Authentic (4)
Natural aptitude (6)
Looking-glass (6)
Waterway (5)
Sugary (5)
Have a meal (3)
Unlock (4)



For today's solution call:
0907 181 2581

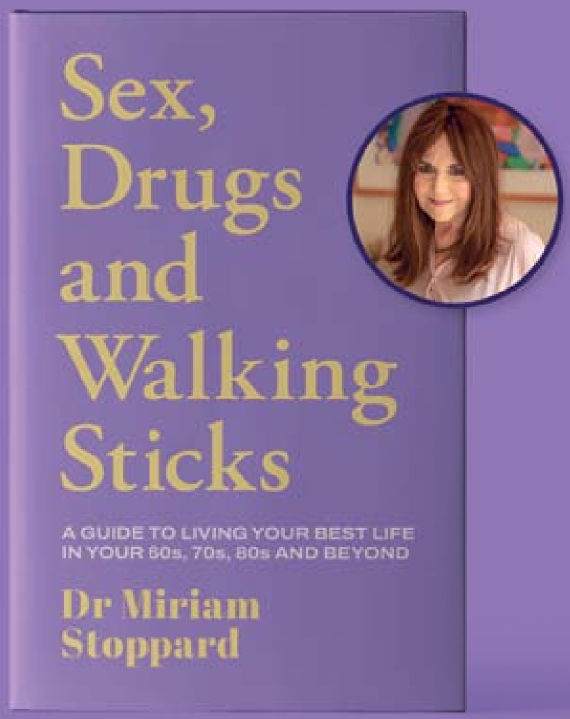
**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION
ACROSS Contracts, Answer, Recital, Dell, Ore, Obvious, Our, Best, Angrily, Unison, Designing.
DOWN Cardboard, Once, Twelve, Receiving, Cut, Tears, Selecting, Goblin, Ounce, Soon, Gas.

**SP: Spoke – Helpline 0333 202 3390*

Sex, Drugs and Walking Sticks

by Dr Miriam Stoppard


Sex, Drugs and Walking Sticks
A GUIDE TO LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE IN YOUR 60s, 70s, 80s AND BEYOND
Dr Miriam Stoppard

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AMAZON

ALPHAPUZZLE™

A B C D E ~~F~~ G H I J K L M N O ~~P~~ Q R S T U V W X Y Z

26	11	3	10	■	18	22	14	6	4	18	13	3
15	■	21	■	17	■	14	■	24	■	22	■	25
23	15	13	17	19	11	24	■	14	16	14	25	6
11	■	25	■	11	■	4	■	17	■	6	■	11
6	14	7	22	11	■	12	15	6	25	15	12	■
14	■	■	■	24	■	20	■	■	■	15	■	6
25	9	18	15	3	11	■	18	14	13	12	17	19
22	■	11	■	■	■	1	■	7	■	■	■	25
■	26	24	11	26	5	11	■	3	14	1	11	24
5	■	2	■	24	■	13	■	11	■	25	■	6
14	7	13	3	11	■	26	24	25	8	8	22	11
12	■	24	■	14	■	14	■	22	■	8	■	11
5	24	11	11	26	25	22	4	■	17	4	14	12

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
F												
14	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**
				P								

Alphapuzzle® tests logic and word power. Each grid number represents a letter. Every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter or letters – below the main grid – to start. **Solution next Saturday.**
Difficulty: 7/10 **Target:** 22 mins
Clue: Find Nancy a new colour.

THINKING SPACE

For up to six Extra Letter clues:
0907 181 2567*
(deduct two minutes for each clue letter heard)

Today's full solution: **0907 181 2566***
*Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.

Alternatively, for six extra letter clues direct to your mobile, text **DSXALPHA** to **64343.** Texts cost £1 plus your standard network rate.

LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS Bomb, Assassin, Aquatic, Eject, Piece, Nitwit, Libido, Zealot, Frugal, Hiker, Aware, Welcome, Monetary, Flan.
DOWN Beanpole, Calm, Mouse, Bargain, Attend, Great (clue), Second, Glower, Avert, Exhale, Special, Knoll, Note, Sturgeon.

Alphapuzzle® ©2025 Acorn Editorial Ltd. All words appear in Chambers Dictionary.

CAN YOU TACKLE THE EXTRA TOUGH ULTRA ALPHAPUZZLE® IN THE SUNDAY EXPRESS EVERY WEEK?

PENTALETTA

M		E
	A	
D		T

Can you find 17 or more words containing only the five letters shown on the left? Each word must include the letter in the centre, in this case A, and must contain at least four letters, but there is no limit on the number of times you can use a letter in any word. Your list should include an eight-letter word that's competitive.

Average mark: 17 words • **Good:** 21 words
Excellent: 25 words • **Incredible:** 28 words

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION: added, addend, addenda, adenine, aide, aided, dead, deaden, dean, deed, deeded, denied, died, dine, dined, dinned, eddied, ended, ennead, idea, indeed, indie, naiad, need, needed.
The clued word was: DEADENED

SUDOKU

			8					4
	5	8		6		2		7
	4	6				3	8	
1			7			8		
	9			8			5	
6		5			9			3
		1	6			4	3	
8		4		2		5		
2					3			8

Fill the grid so that every column, row, and 3x3 square includes all the digits from 1 to 9.
Level: Moderate
Target: 24 mins

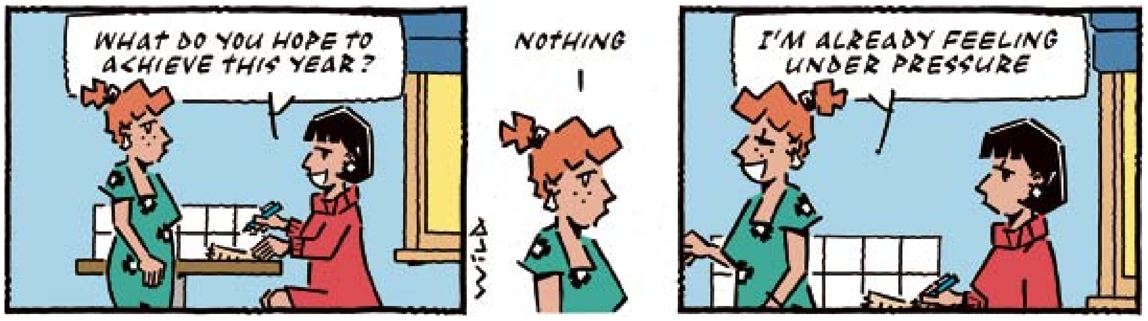
LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

6	2	8	7	9	5	1	3	4
9	7	3	1	2	4	8	6	5
1	4	5	6	8	3	7	9	2
4	1	9	8	3	7	5	2	6
2	8	7	9	5	6	3	4	1
5	3	6	4	1	2	9	8	7
3	9	2	5	4	1	6	7	8
7	5	4	3	6	8	2	1	9
8	6	1	2	7	9	4	5	3

For extra clues call:
0901 322 5603
**Calls cost 75p plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

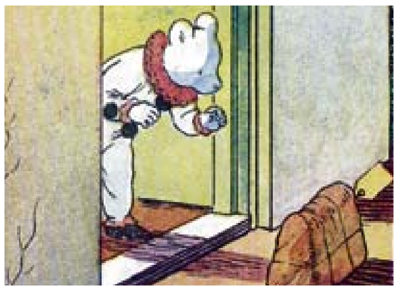
For today's full solution
call: 0907 181 2575
**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

FAITH, HOPE AND SUE Lisa Wild


WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE THIS YEAR?
NOTHING
I'M ALREADY FEELING UNDER PRESSURE
WILD

RUPERT AND THE COUGH DROP No 44

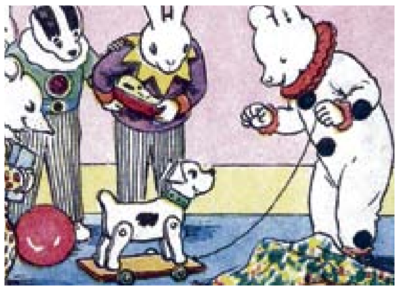
To order the New Rupert Bear Soft Toy (30cm – Rainbow Designs) at £14.99 please call 01872 562315: or order on www.classicrupertbearshop.com. UK P & P £4.95.



Then comes a knocking, as before,
Why there's his parcel by the door!

Rupert hears another knock on the door and he runs to open it. Again there is no one to be seen, but on the path is a parcel addressed to himself. Tearing off the paper, he stares in delight. "Come and look at my present," he calls. "It's a wooden dog exactly like Santa's snuffle-hound who fetched me because I had the cough drop. My adventure wasn't a dream!"

The End. Another adventure begins tomorrow.

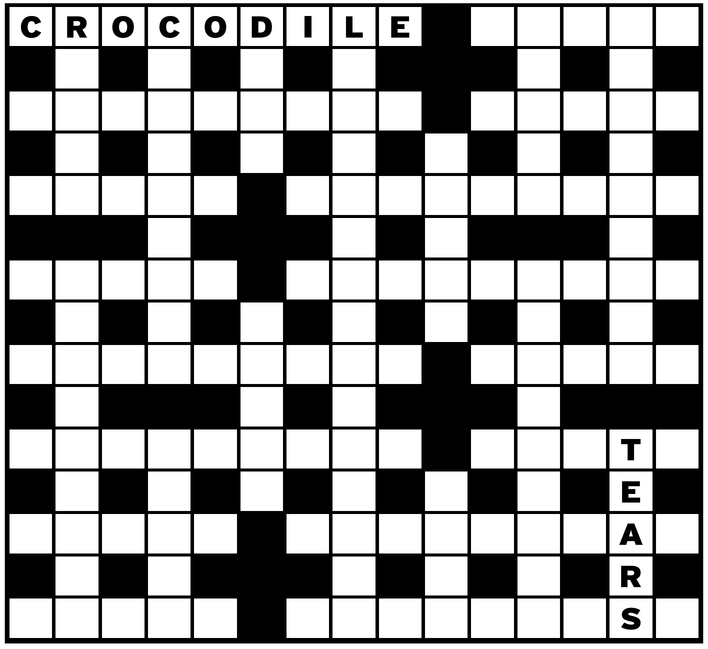


And inside – look what he has found!
A dog, like Santa's snuffle-hound.

THE SUNSHINE PUZZLE

The Sunshine Puzzle has been a firm favourite with readers of the Express for many years. All you need to do is find the correct home for the listed words. We have helped you by placing two. Here are the words that go into the grid:

DEER
OGRE
ACUTE
AWARE
BATHE
BOWEL
CARGO
CAROL
EIDER
PAEAN
PRINT
RULER
SAUNA
TEARS
TENTH
VALET
AGREEABLE
AIR GUITAR
ANARCHISM
BOATHOUSE
CLIENTELE
CROCODILE
FACE VALUE
GUERRILLA
ILLIBERAL
INAMORATA
INNERMOST
KILOMETRE
LEADING QUESTION



For today's solution call: **0907 181 2584**

**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

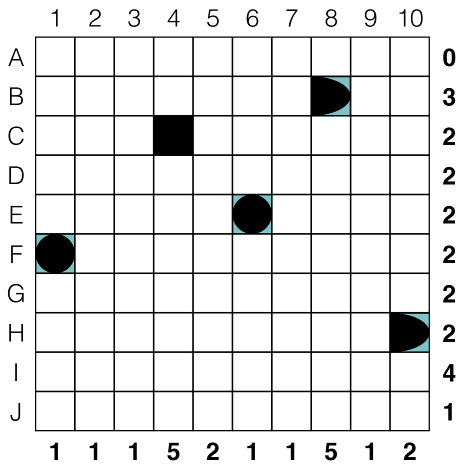
LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

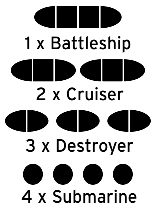
ACROSS Romance, Shipped, Cruel, Aeroplane, Extensive, Tunes, Swift, Inspected, Messenger, Tiles, Spins, Languages, Insurance, Phase, Guesses, Torches. **DOWN** Rockets, Mountains, Nylon, Examining, Serve, Impatient, Plain, Dressed, Treasures, Strongest, Telegraph, Messing, Systems, Issue, Links, Upper.

THE DAILY EXPRESS 30-SECOND CHALLENGE

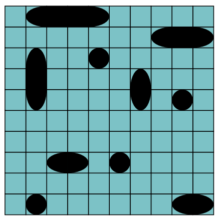
TODAY'S ANSWERS: BEGINNER = 77; INTERMEDIATE = 74; ADVANCED = 352.

BATTLESHIPS



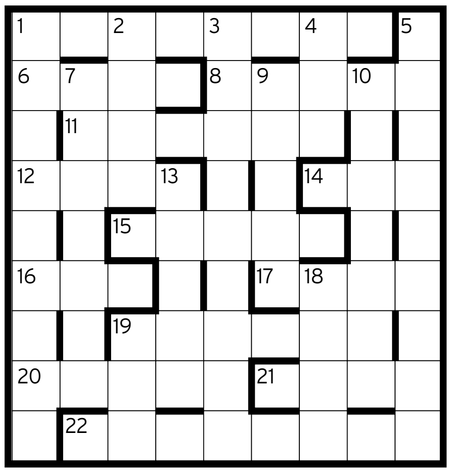


LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION



FIND where the fleet of ships shown is hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some squares have been filled in to start you off.

SMALL CROSSWORD



ACROSS
- **1** Stress (8)
- **6** Movie (4)
- **8** Artificial fibre (5)
- **11** Underground passage (6)
- **12** Relieve (4)
- **14** Flying mammal (3)
- **15** _ Ashley, fashion designer (5)
- **16** Metallic element (3)
- **17** Write one's name (4)
- **19** Safe (6)
- **20** Leg joint (5)
- **21** Garden pipe (4)
- **22** People who move to another country (8)

DOWN
- **1** Successful in producing results (9)
- **2** In addition to (4)
- **3** Rue cannon (anag.) (9)
- **4** Sick (3)
- **5** Examples (9)
- **7** European language (7)
- **9** Long periods of time (5)
- **10** Citrus fruits (7)
- **13** Artist's stand (5)
- **18** Golf club (4)
- **19** Snow runner (3)

For today's solution call: **0907 181 2583**

**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS 1 Concrete, 6 Atom, 8 Every, 11 Russia, 12 Hang, 14 GMT, 15 Blues, 16 Dig, 17 Spur, 19 Archer, 20 Agree, 21 Vase, 22 Measures.
DOWN 1 Cathedral, 2 Noun, 3 Resources, 4 Tea, 5 Mysteries, 7 Trading, 9 Vines, 10 Rumours, 13 Glare, 18 Pear, 19 Are.

TARGET

N	A	A
E	W	N
I	K	G

HOW many words of four letters or more can you make from the letters shown here? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each must contain the centre letter and there must be at least one nine-letter word. No plurals. Verb forms ending in "s" permitted.

TODAY'S TARGET
Good 13; **very good** 19; **excellent** 25 (or more). **Solution next Saturday.**

LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION
lapel, leap, leapt, napa, nape, neap, paean, paella, palate, pale, pall, pallet, pane, panel, pant, pate, patella, paten, peal, peat, pelt, penal, pent, petal, plan, plane, planet, plant, **PLANTABLE**, platan, plate, platen, plea, pleat, pleb, tape

Call **0907 181 2586** for today's Target solution
**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. All puzzles use The Chambers Dictionary*

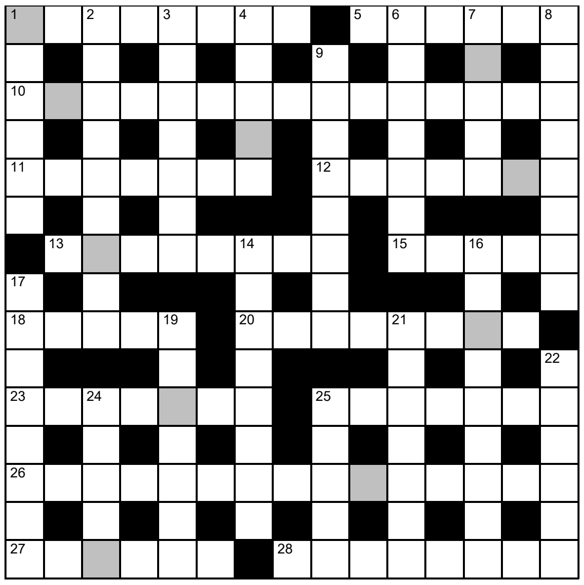
CRUSADER CROSSWORD

WIN £100

FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN £100 CASH read down the letters in the highlighted squares to reveal the mystery word

ACROSS
- **1** Term from the Kent area is used by me, mostly strict (8)
- **5** Garment for a royal interrupting hymn (6)
- **10** Spoiling race, I film a harsh RAF officer (3,5,7)
- **11** Game of tennis for twins (7)
- **12** French one with energy accepting the German experience (7)
- **13** Using tram, e.g., I'd somehow relocated (8)
- **15** Follow directions provided by woman (5)
- **18** Lists of buns (5)
- **20** Trader's chart men misplaced (8)
- **23** Girl extremely rarely going round the French place displaying art (7)
- **25** Rapid speech of comedian finally shown design (7)
- **26** See lone tot shake badly and run away (4,2,4,5)
- **27** Engineers connected with type of holiday destination (6)
- **28** Get rid of plane originally taken by one boy (8)

DOWN
- **1** First to sell convenient mixed drink (6)
- **2** Kangaroo, for example, mauls pair unexpectedly (9)
- **3** Academic has chapter inside relating to the sun (7)
- **4** Odds of girl getting points (5)
- **6** A card game cut short (7)
- **7** Different parent, topless (5)
- **8** Ran fast to get unusual pale gold (8)
- **9** Burn second shape with hesitation (8)
- **14** Cat, male, Conservative picked up? Rubbish! (8)
- **16** Foolish eccentric sees Len on ship (9)
- **17** More intelligent bachelor, proper, seen with former queen (8)
- **19** Place of refuge used by the woman lieutenant on English river (7)
- **21** The chat possibly involving axe (7)
- **22** Agreement with place of education, so new (6)
- **24** Untrue statements about king's preferences (5)
- **25** Bit of tranquillity, say (5)



TO ENTER: Call **0904 161 3700** (calls cost £1.50 plus your telephone company's network access charge) and leave your answer and details, or text **DXCRUS** followed by a space, your answer, name and address details to **88833** (texts cost £1.50 plus your standard network rate). Lines close at midnight tonight. Or send your grid containing the answer in the shaded squares by posting it to: Crusader Crossword, January 3, PO Box 8694, Derby DE1 9TW. Entries must be postmarked by January 5 at the latest. For any postal enquiries, call helpline number. An extra day is given for postal entries during bank holidays. SP: Spoke – 0333 202 3390.

● ***One weekly winner will be the first random correct entry drawn from all entry routes after the closing date of midnight tonight. Competition runs Sunday to Saturday. The Editor's decision is final.***

NEED HELP? Call **0904 161 1609** for 5 extra clues! Calls cost £1.50 plus your telephone company's network access charge.

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

Weekly Crusader Crossword Winner
14-20 December: R Long, Cambridgeshire;
Please allow 30 days for prizes to arrive

LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS 1 Broadway, 5 Bistro, 10 Notting Hill Gate, 11 Iberian, 12 Inexact, 13 Language, 15 Swarm, 18 Pilot, 20 Literate, 23 Inhibit, 25 Placate, 26 The powers that be, 27 Reside, 28 Crusader.
DOWN 1 Bandit, 2 On the ball, 3 Driving, 4 Argon, 6 Illness, 7 Tiara, 8 Overtime, 9 Diligent, 14 Allotted, 16 Attracted, 17 Sprinter, 19 Tabloid, 21 Reaches, 22 Meteor, 24 Heels, 25 Poser. **Prizeword:** Whimpered.

GET THE BRILLIANT EXPRESS PUZZLES APP ON YOUR PHONE TODAY!

THE ALPHABEATER

CAN you crack the Alphabeater? It's a tough twist on our popular Alphapuzzle, designed to stretch your mental muscles to the limit. Each grid number below represents a letter or a black square. As in Alphapuzzle, every letter of the alphabet is used. But now you have to complete the grid too! Use the given letters and the given black squares below the main grid to start.

To add to the fiendish fun, Alphabeater is 'rotationally symmetrical'. In other words the grid is the same if you turn the page upside down. So, for example if there is a six-letter word Across which starts in the top left corner, there will be a corresponding six-letter word Across which ends in the bottom right corner square. Every black square has a symmetrical 'twin' but the 'twin' may not always share the same number. This can help identify other black squares. Of course if the centre square is black it has no corresponding 'twin'. Solution next Saturday.

A B C D E ~~F~~ G H I J ~~K~~ L M N O P Q R S T U V W X ~~Y~~ Z

17	9	4	40	7	36	11	15	34	31	23	29	37
5	20	1	8	9	24	40	28	9	38	29	2	22
25	29	4	29	33	8	12	4	5	22	8	9	11
26	2	16	23	29	10	40	7	28	39	13	22	20
18	22	38	28	5	28	11	20	1	13	16	5	33
22	8	24	35	27	38	34	12	19	22	9	38	28
9	12	1	20	28	15	22	7	28	30	11	5	31
2	29	18	22	34	36	37	13	12	22	26	37	31
15	34	8	32	16	29	34	39	19	17	22	25	14
29	40	4	9	29	38	13	22	20	24	24	33	23
26	33	11	13	1	2	26	11	4	13	15	13	17
21	9	6	22	35	28	3	27	9	12	16	40	34
1	35	12	20	23	10	8	37	35	9	33	6	14

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
					K								Y		■				
21	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**	**27**	**28**	**29**	**30**	**31**	**32**	**33**	**34**	**35**	**36**	**37**	**38**	**39**	**40**
				F											■				

Target Time: 34 minutes

Today's full solution
0907 181 2557
Extra letter clues
0907 181 2559
Today's full solution
0907 181 2557
Extra letter clues
0907 181 2559

Call for up to six extra letter clues. (Deduct three minutes for each extra letter heard.) Callers will also be given two black square numbers free of any target time penalty.
*Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.
Alternatively, for six Extra Letter clues direct to your mobile, text **DSXBEAT** to **64343.** Texts cost £1 plus your standard network rate.

LAST SATURDAY'S SOLUTION Black squares: 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 15, 18, 19, 20, 23, 26, 29, 33, 37. **Across:** Hollow, Laugh, Saliva, Verger, Overtone, Olfactory, Ninepins, Kennel, Doyens, Proof, Gazebo. **Down:** Clove, Kingdom, Rejoin, Agog, Era, Aroma, Issue, Lisle, Tasks, Owl, Nerd, Oxygen, Quavers, Bluff.

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IATA

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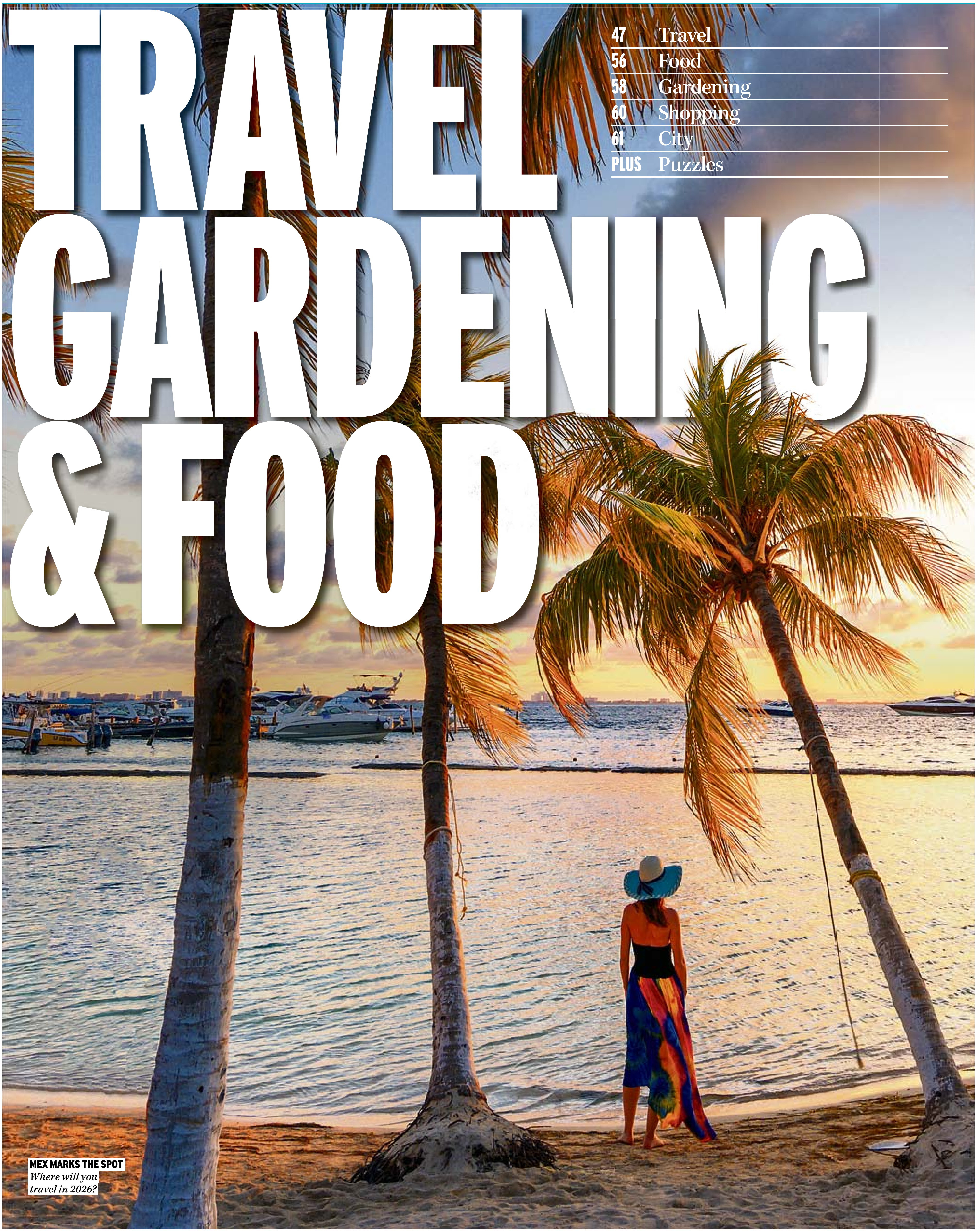
PLUS Puzzles



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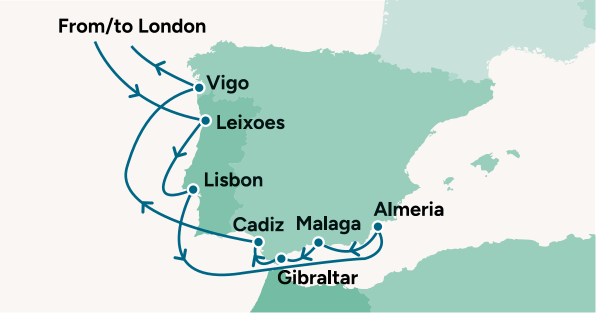
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Cadiz
Malaga
Almeria
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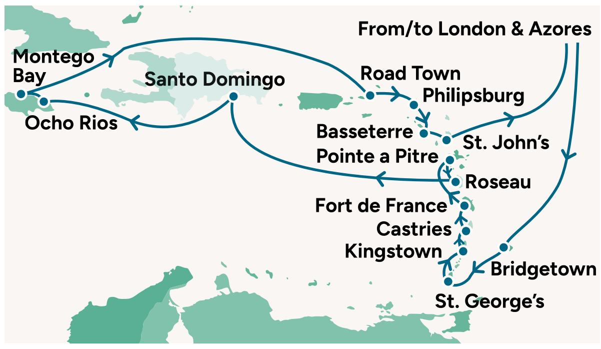
GEMS OF THE CARIBBEAN SEA
42 NTS | *AMBITION* | LONDON TILBURY | 05.01.27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WINTER SUNSHINE ESCAPE TO THE CANARY ISLANDS
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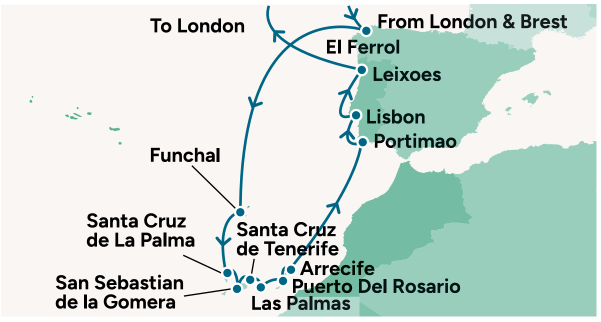
To London
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El Ferrol
Leixoes
Lisbon
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Balcony	£3,159	£3,649
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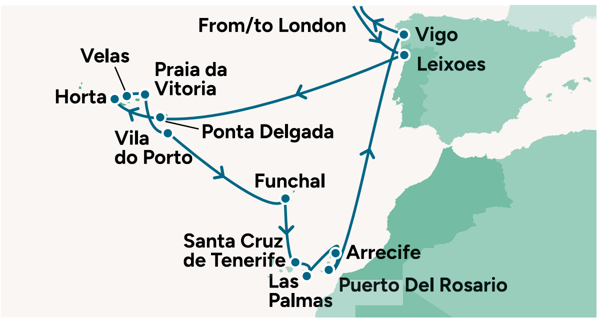
WINTER SUNSHINE ESCAPE TO THE AZORES
22 NTS | *AMBITION* | LONDON TILBURY | 17.02.28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Leixoes
Velas
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Horta
Vila do Porto
Ponta Delgada
Funchal
Santa Cruz de Tenerife
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Puerto Del Rosario

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TRAVEL
Edited by JULIE DELAHAYE
EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS

MAJESTIC *Tokyo cityscape with Mount Fuji in background*

Ten out of yen for Tokyo

Tha Japanese city is surprisingly good value says ANDY GILPIN – as long as you spend like a local

Right, let's dust down some myths and misconceptions about Tokyo. It's not a city gridlocked with traffic, not everyone has green hair and a labubu doll tied to their waists* and giant mutated lizard attacks are not prevalent. And it's not expensive – in fact, it's pretty cheap.

The caveat is that the yen is currently weak, especially against the pound, so money goes a lot further. It was around 180 yen to the pound when I visited, which is punchy.

The misnomer that it's a sky-high-priced city comes from the 1980s, when it was the economic centre of the world and, thanks to the tech boom, incredibly expensive.

But the world has moved on and in many ways Tokyo hasn't. That doesn't mean it's not still clean, functional and an assault on the senses, because it is – just not at a price. We had a mission: see as much of the sprawling city as we could in just 72 hours.

Our base was a newly opened Yotel in the busy but sanitised Ginza district – the first to open in Japan. You may think the name and style of Yotel is Japanese, but you'd be wrong. It's a British brand created by a Japanophile who also founded YO! Sushi.

Rooms cost around £175 a night and are exactly what you'd expect: small but perfectly formed. There's a reclining smart bed that doubles as a sofa, an automatic toilet with a button that plays a jingle when you finish your busines and a mirror that opens to reveal an ironing board. There's also the obligatory chatty robot that brings room service.

Shopping and drinking in Tokyo is not about staying in the hotel. Ginza is one of the city's main shopping districts, home to the world's biggest Uniqlo. Clothes are cheaper than in Britain and you can pick up several outfits for less than £500, all with the cutting-edge design Japan is known for.

Wages are relatively low in Japan and prices, by and large, haven't moved on since the 80s.

This is why stressed businessmen with low disposable incomes frequent all-you-can-drink bars for the princely sum of 1500 yen (£8).

Beer is a few pounds in a bar and cheaper still in 7-Eleven, which also sells surprisingly good fried chicken.

FEEL THE FORCE *Andy dressed in a kimono*

If you're after a drink, I highly recommend Golden Gai, a maze of tiny bars no bigger than living rooms, where you peer in to see if there's space and practically ask permission before sitting.

You can smoke inside (but strangely, not on the street), so prepare to smell like pre-smoking-ban Britain. A pack of cigarettes is 600 yen (£3) if you fancy joining in. In one bar, we were talked into a small glass of snake sake – complete with the unfortunate specimen floating in the jar. It was £15, but honestly, it had a snake in it.

Eating out is not expensive. On our first night we went to Kushiyaki Bistro Fukumimi Ginza, where we removed our shoes and sat at a low table to enjoy beef and chicken skewers, tofu and some of the best spring rolls I've ever had (cheese was apparently the missing ingredient).

After multiple Kirin beers and sake, we completed the cliché with a private karaoke room. If I hear Elvis' Are You Lonesome Tonight again, I may welcome a Godzilla strike.

No trip to Tokyo is complete without Harajuku's iconic Takeshita and Cat streets, full of cosplay, anime and a sensory overload that leaves you mentally reassembled.

And then there's Shibuya Crossing – the busiest in the world – where hundreds line up, waiting for the green light before charging across, dodging Instagrammers, Mario karts and cretinous British tourists like myself. Thousands watch on webcams around the world, and it's all free.

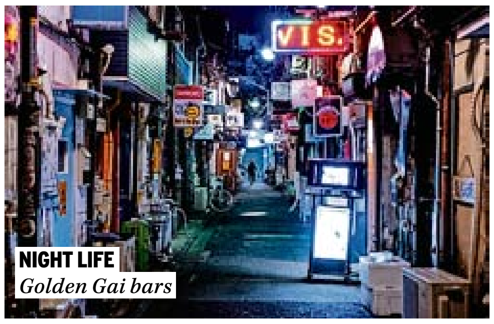
We did touristy things like sushi-making, crafting our own chopsticks (surprisingly fun) and a traditional tea ceremony (7700 yen) where I wore a kimono and channelled my inner Obi-Wan Kenobi.

Tourist traps, yes, but worthwhile glimpses of traditional Japan.

Even must-dos like Tokyo Tower cost only 1200 yen, and Hama-rikyu Gardens is 300 yen. Getting around on the metro is also easy and cheap.

Yes, Japan on a budget is absolutely achievable – as long as you don't insist on making chopsticks and eating your own hand-rolled sushi while dressed as Obi-Wan Kenobi.

** Some people do have green hair and a labubu doll tied to their waists.*



NIGHT LIFE *Golden Gai bars*

PEACEFUL RETREAT *Hama-rikyu Gardens*

WATCH YOUR STEP *Shibuya Crossing*

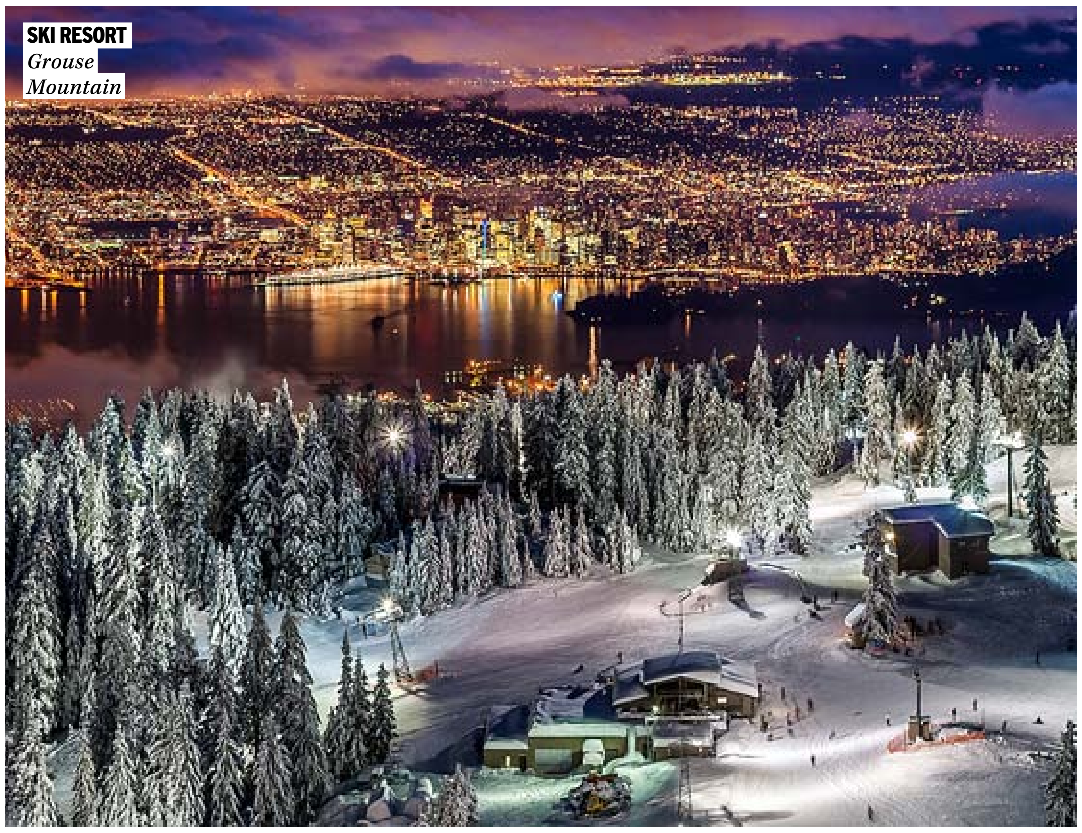
GET THERE

Fly from Heathrow to Tokyo Haneda via British Airways *ba.com*

BOOK IT

Andy stayed at the YOTEL Tokyo Ginza in Minato City, a prime area for shopping, dining and nightlife that is a three-minute walk from Shimbashi Station. It has 244 rooms, many of which feature "SmartBed" motorised beds that can recline and convert into sofas. The hotel also has an on-site, all-day dining and bar restaurant, as well as self-service check-in/out kiosks. *yotel.com*

New frontier for family making Canada home



SKI RESORT *Grouse Mountain*

By **AMY JONES**

Would you sell your home and uproot everything to start again abroad? For a growing number of Brits, the answer is yes. Starting two years ago, there has been an almost 10% increase in Britons relocating overseas, with 639,000 people leaving the UK last year, according to the Office for National Statistics.

One Yorkshire family, in search of a fresh start, has done just that, swapping England for a new life across the Atlantic.

Jack Masterson, 36, and his wife Natalie, 35, moved from Huddersfield to Canada with their two children. "For years, we both had this nagging thought of 'what if we moved elsewhere?'" said Jack. "Then it quickly became 'where and when?'"

FRESH START *The Masterton family*

SUNSET CITY *Vancouver*

The turning point came when they discovered Canada's Express Entry visa scheme.

As a former NHS nurse, Natalie qualified under the healthcare category, allowing the family to relocate in just six months.

The visa was introduced in 2023 to address Canada's shortage of healthcare professionals, and thousands of Brits have reportedly made the move since.

"With this option available, Canada became a no-brainer," Jack said.

"They're short on nurses here. Natalie arrived in March, then the kids and I followed a month later. If you want an adventure, look no further."

The family settled in North Vancouver, near Grouse Mountain, where Jack says Brits are everywhere. "There's a reason it's called British Columbia," he laughed. "There are so many Brits here."

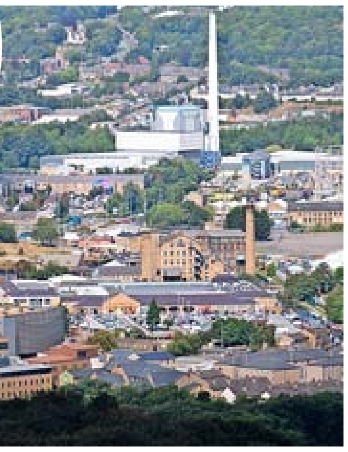
Britons in Canada are often nicknamed 'Limeys', a term dating back to the 19th century when sailors were given citrus fruit. Jack says Lynn Valley has a strong British community, though he admits one thing is missing.

"We really miss English pubs. There are loads of microbreweries, but the pub is a British institution. You can't even buy beer in supermarkets here."

While taxes are generally lower, the cost of everyday items came as a shock. "Prices are insane," Jack said. "A loaf of bread can cost CA$5, around £2.50, which is far more than back home."

Despite this, he has no regrets.

"Life here has been an adjustment but I wouldn't change it. It's prettier than Yorkshire, people are welcoming, and the kids love it. You can just jump in the car and go hiking in one of the most beautiful places in the world."



OLD LIFE *Huddersfield*

Simon Hood, a relocation expert at John Mason International, said affordability concerns exist in Canada too, but many clients move for lifestyle reasons. "Sometimes the intangible benefits matter more than the economics," he said.

CITY BREAK *Marrakech*

Your ultimate sunny escape 2026 hotlist

Find the perfect place to get a cheering blast of sunshine, whatever the time of year, says JULIE DELAHAYE

If your idea of a dream holiday is basking in the sunshine with a cocktail and beach view, we've got you covered. We're kicking off the year with the ultimate sun-seeker's guide to the hottest destinations to bookmark for every month.

IDEAL TIME *Dubai trip*

Postcard-worthy beaches and brilliant nightlife

JANUARY

Mexico: Temperatures average around 29C and conditions stay dry and sunny.

Cancun, Puerto Vallarta and Cabo San Lucas all boast some postcard-worthy beaches, brilliant nightlife and tons of hotels, including all-inclusive.

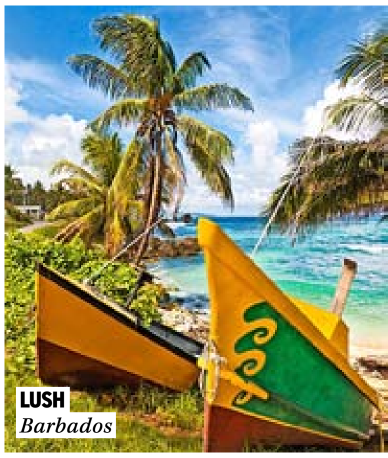
Caribbean: Swerve the monsoon season and visit in January for the best chance of sun. Barbados, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic are some of the beautiful spots with those white sand beaches, lush green backdrops and plenty of adventures to be had.

Dubai, UAE: With temperatures ranging from 15C to 24C in January, it's an ideal time to visit before temperatures soar and it becomes too hot for some. Highlights include the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, the huge Dubai Mall and its beautiful beaches.

FEBRUARY

Cape Verde: The island nation boasts temperatures between 21-27C, with seven to eight hours of sun every day. It's warm enough to make the most of its beaches and the sea is often calm enough to enjoy water sports.

Thailand: Given the temperatures of 24-33C, minimal rain and heaps of sunshine, Thailand has ideal conditions whether you're looking to



LUSH *Barbados*

WINTER THRILLS
Koh Samui Thailand

make the most of the sand in Phuket, island hop or explore the culture and history of hotspots including Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

Costa Rica: You'll miss the peak winter sun crowds but still get in before the rainy season kicks off in April, meaning opportunities to explore the rainforest, hike volcanoes or laze on one of the many, many golden beaches. February is also one of the best times to head to Monteverde and its famous cloud forest.

MARCH

Morocco: For a city break head to Marrakech, while Agadir is ideal for beach breaks – both enjoy balmy temperatures of around 21C now.

It's ideal weather if you want to wander around the markets and restaurants without getting too hot – and if there is a hike in temperature, there are plenty of hotels and riads with pools that invite you to cool off.

Egypt: The beaches of Sharm-el-Sheikh are calling if you want to make the most of the 27C weather. If you've always wanted to explore the temples and tombs of Ancient Egypt, you might want to consider Hurghada where temperatures average 26C, with easy day trips to nearby Luxor, home to the Valley of the Kings and the Karnak Temple.

APRIL

US: Nevada, Arizona and Florida all have hot and sunny weather in April. Las Vegas has the epic nightlife but can also make for a great base to start a road trip across Arizona and California.

Florida starts to get a little busier but if you're eyeing up Walt Disney World and Universal theme parks, then visit during the earlier part of the month to avoid the crowds.

South Africa: Cape Town boasts pleasant weather for sightseeing at around 24C. There is plenty to see, from climbing to the top of Table Mountain (there is a cable car if you don't fancy the hike), to Boulders Beach and its penguin colonies.

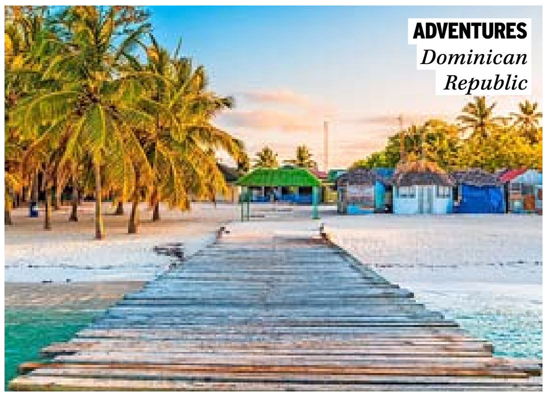
MAY

European hotspots: If you're eyeing up a short break before the school holidays properly kick off, it's worth considering some European destinations. Portugal, Spain and Greece all start to get warm up with average temperatures around 20-25C.

Peru: Peru's dry season starts in May, while the 19-22C weather makes it bearable if you want to hike the Andes or Machu Picchu. But be warned, it's one of the most popular months for visiting.

GETAWAY
Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

Explore the rainforest hike volcanoes or laze on the golden sand



ADVENTURES
Dominican Republic

JUNE, JULY, AUGUST

In the peak holiday months, if you're after sunshine, you don't need to head to far-flung destinations.

Portugal, Spain, Greece, France, Turkey, Canary Islands, the Greek Islands, Malta, Italy and Cyprus all boast temperatures in the high 20Cs (and sometimes even high 30Cs). They offer the classics: beautiful beaches, swim-friendly waters, heaps of bustling resorts and epic nightlife.

SEPTEMBER

Italy: If you're looking to tick the colourful villages in the Amalfi Coast off the list, September offers 20-28C weather that's ideal for wandering, not to mention you'll miss the peak summer crowds.

Croatia: Croatian cities from Dubrovnik to Split have average temperatures of 25C so you can easily spend time exploring the historic streets without having to fight against summer heat. And it's still warm enough to enjoy the beaches, or swim in the sea on a boat tour.

OCTOBER

Cyprus: October is warm enough for beach days but without the summer crowds, especially in popular spots such as Paphos and Limassol. Nissi Beach in Ayia Napa is frequently cited as a top beach choice for its vibrant atmosphere and shallow turquoise waters, while Fig Tree Bay in Protaras is recommended for families due to its calm, shallow waters.

The Canary Islands: These offer year-round sunshine and in October you can still enjoy daily temperatures of up to 27C – perfect for enjoying the beaches, eating al fresco, and going for a scenic hike along the volcanic landscapes.

Plenty of hotels and restaurants are still open even if the season has started to wind down, so you won't get the party crowds but still get atmosphere.

NOVEMBER

Australia: Hotspots in the south including Sydney, Melbourne and Perth is where you'll find sunnier weather. November can be the start of rainy season is some northern parts of Australia, so swerve those if it's just sunshine you're after.

Cambodia: The country enters its dry season in November and offers hot weather with temperatures ranging from 30-32C, which is ideal if you want to laze on its incredible beaches. For something spectacular, explore the Angkor Wat temple complex, although you may want to head early in the morning when it's cooler and quieter.

DECEMBER

Thailand: Monsoon season tends to end in October, so by December you're more likely to have the hot and sunny winter weather that makes this country so popular with Brits.

Similar to February, the temperatures are warm and ideal for sightseeing or lazing on a beach.

Florida: Want to make the most of the theme parks and beaches without having to deal with the holiday crowds? December can be an excellent time to visit, not to mention there are plenty of cruises that depart from Florida, so it can be a great base from which to also sail to the likes of the Caribbean.

TOUGH JOB
Busy staff

DISHING THE DIRT ON HOTEL ROOMS THAT ARE 'CLEAN'

By **AMY JONES**

The hospitality industry is notoriously demanding, with long hours and irregular shifts, which makes anyone working in the field an unsung hero in my eyes. With immense time pressures and hundreds of rooms to turn around before a 3pm check-in, it's no surprise that things occasionally slip through the cracks.

Over the years, I've checked into supposedly clean hotel rooms only to find a pair of pants on the floor, a half-bottle of water left in the fridge, a dirty dressing gown or even a bloodstained sheet. While most of these things are easy to spot at a glance, there's one detail I always inspect closely – and clean myself – every time I arrive: the glassware.

Through my time working in the hospitality industry, I've learned that not all hotels thoroughly wash mugs and glasses between stays. On more than one occasion, I've seen busy housekeepers rinse mugs in the bathroom sink, wipe them with a cloth and put them back for the next guest. I'm not suggesting every hotel does this, but based on my own experiences, it's made me cautious.

MUGS GAME
Careful check

An ABC News undercover investigation found that housekeeping at 11 out of 15 hotels didn't replace glassware during cleaning, instead rinsing it in the sink before wiping with a cloth.

Next time you check into a hotel, boil the kettle and give your mug a rinse – or bring your own bottle and ask for a fresh mug at the bar. No one wants to think about someone else's lips with their morning coffee.

The city with the winning Formula

WELCOME TO Fabulous LAS VEGAS NEVADA
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BREATHTAKING *Track with Sphere backdrop*

BUZZING *The Strip by night*

SPRAWLING *Caesars Palace resort*

ARCADE FIRE *James on F1 simulator*

POLE POSITION *F1 car roars past*

Bright lights, casinos, and now superfast cars? Las Vegas has them all, says JAMES WHALING

Whoever coined New York "the city that never sleeps" had clearly never been to Las Vegas. Certainly not in Formula One week. When the glitz and glamour of the world's fastest sport meets the sheer chaos of the world's craziest city – it takes it to another level.

Las Vegas is like nowhere else. From the moment you touch down in this metropolis of Nevada, after a lengthy 10-and-a-half-hour flight from the UK, any hints of jet lag are forgotten.

The sights and sounds of Sin City are quite literally designed to keep you awake and, more pertinently, keep you spending. From arriving at the mighty Caesars Palace resort, and my base, the Nobu Hotel, I was met with an array of gambling machines and tables occupied 24 hours a day. Numerous casinos on the world-famous Strip even have an artificial blue sky on the ceilings.

And with an extra 150,000 people in the city for the Grand Prix, Vegas took on a new lease of life. This isn't like visiting Silverstone or Brands Hatch. There is no purpose-built F1 track. Instead, Las Vegas Boulevard shuts down to traffic for the weekend, meaning you need your walking boots to get around the hotels, casinos and bars.

Handily, with the main attractions all in close proximity, that is possible. But even so, I was walking up to 30,000 steps a day in order to experience everything this bustling hub of activity had to offer.

And I was lucky enough to be given a guided tour of the track two days before the race, ahead of the drivers heading out for their practice session.

It was an opportunity to get up close and personal with the sport's biggest stars, their cars, and the thousands of staff in the pit lane, while being walked through the unique challenges each corner presents.

I witnessed a practice pit stop and gained an insight into the pressures on not only the drivers but also each staff member to execute the perfect race-day strategy.

It was then time to head to the F1 Arcade to try my hand behind the wheel in a simulator. Thankfully, unlike those out on the track, I was able to select a setting more suitable to my level of expertise, and crashing the car into the barrier at top speeds meant simply hitting restart and having another go.

At the race itself, the adrenaline rush of seeing these supercars whizz past at speeds of over 200mph genuinely takes your breath away. And nowhere is it more fitting than with an incredible backdrop of the Vegas skyline, including the unmistakable Sphere.

Opening in September 2023 with a residency from Irish rockers U2, the Sphere is one of the world's craziest and most novel entertainment venues as well as a must-see on any visit to Vegas.

WELCOME LAS VEGAS

FAMOUS *James with Vegas sign*

In addition to concerts, the venue serves as a 360-degree, fully immersive cinema. I saw the 1930s classic, The Wizard of Oz, originally shot for a 4:3 movie screen.

To see this vintage piece of cinema being brought into the 21st century, complete with effects including fog, wind, and objects falling from the sky into your lap, is an experience to behold.

Another key pillar of the Las Vegas entertainment circuit is the various Cirque du Soleil shows available at numerous venues on the Strip. One such show is "O" at the Bellagio – so named because "eau" is French for water.

The show provides a spectacular array of aquatic performances through a journey of love, danger, adventure and courage. And in addition to acrobats, it features artistic swimmers and divers, some of whom have even represented their countries at the Olympic Games.

The supremely agile and flexible performers are joined by a flying pirate ship in a stunning display of gravity-defying artistry.

> ***'Arts District is the perfect opportunity to get away from the hustle and bustle'***

Vegas, of course, also boasts a vast array of food and drink options to suit a range of budgets. At the top end, the aptly named High Steaks restaurant pairs incomparable 180-degree views of the Strip with a selection of succulent meats, seafood and to wrap up, show-stopping desserts.

Yardbird in the Venetian Resort is a perfect spot for breakfast with their signature chicken and waffles brilliantly over-the-top in every way. Away from the chaos of the Strip, the Vegas Arts District provides the perfect opportunity to get away from the hustle and bustle and enjoy a more reserved area of this magnificent city.

Packed with quirky shops and idyllic brunch spots, it's hard to believe you are just a stone's throw away from the world's capital of extravagance.

But that is the allure of Las Vegas. The most brilliantly bonkers city in the world.

GET THERE

Virgin Atlantic offers daily direct flights to Las Vegas from London Heathrow starting from £462. *virginatlantic.com* Prices subject to change.

BOOK IT

Rooms at the NOBU Hotel Las Vegas at Caesars Palace start from $238 per night (approximately £207), excludes taxes. *caesars.com* The Grand Prix Plaza, will officially reopen for visitors on 30th January 2026. *grandprixplaza.com*

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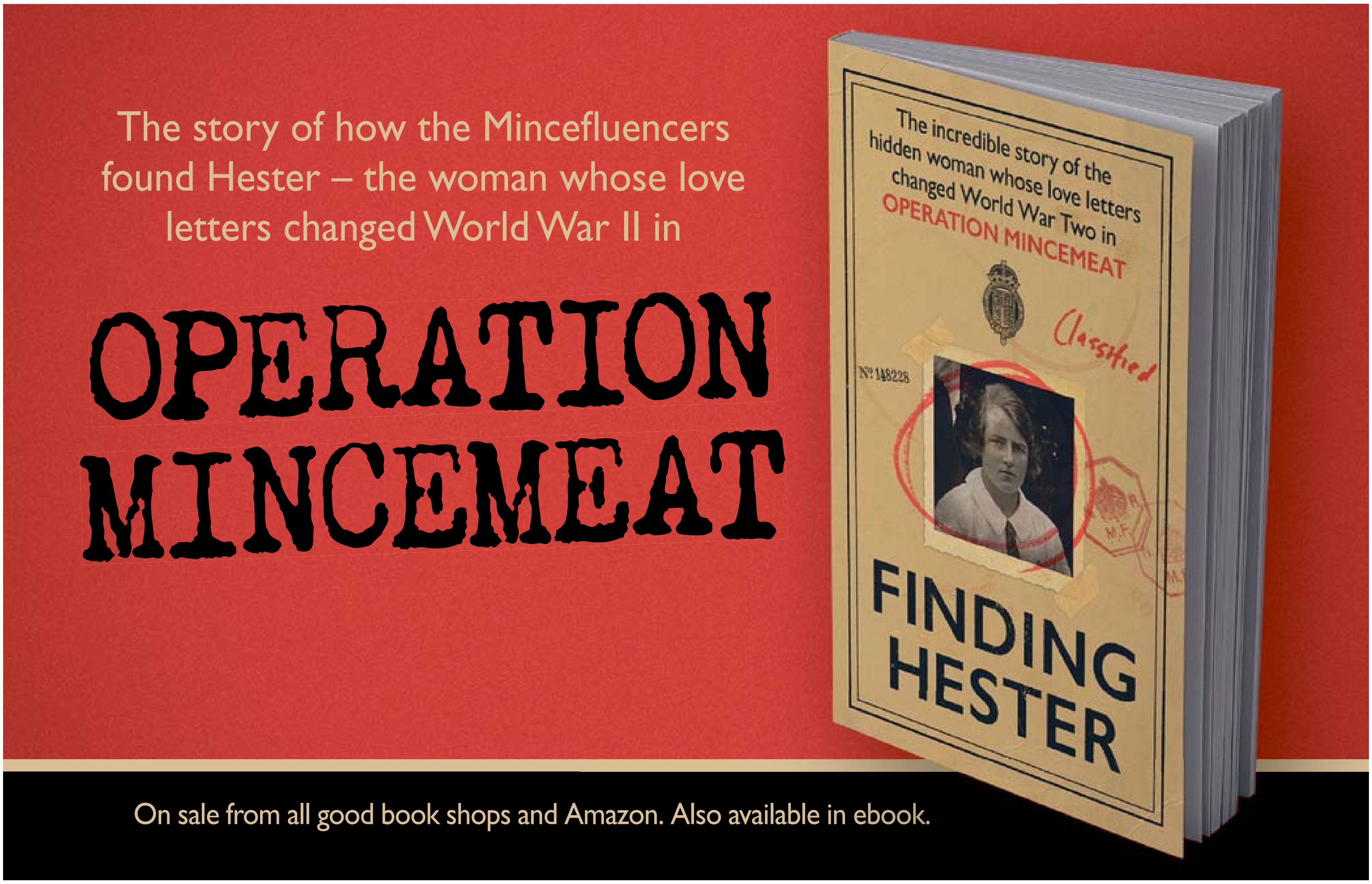

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FOOD FEED YOUR SOUL

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Embrace a healthy start to 2026

After the sparkle, snacks and over-indulgence of December, early January is the right time for a reset. Nothing extreme, just food to help you feel good. Think fresh flavours, colourful plates and meals as nourishing as they are comforting. Soothing soups, vibrant salads and a spicy curry are on my menu plus, of course, the odd selection box chocolate which needs eating up!

ROAST SQUASH & HOUMOUS WINTER SALAD

SERVES 4 • EASY • PREP: 15 MINS • COOK: 55 MINS

Salads aren't just for summer – this gorgeous winter salad is loaded with beta-carotene and vitamin C to help support your immunity.

- **4 small potatoes (about 320g), skin-on, cut into wedges**
- **320g butternut squash cut into thin slices**
- **2 red and yellow or green peppers deseeded and cut into big chunks**
- **3 red onions (about 320g), cut into slices**
- **200g carrots halved lengthways and cut into thick slices**
- **1tbsp rapeseed oil**
- **1tbsp fresh thyme leaves**
- **30g rocket to serve**

For the houmous

- **2 x 400g cans butter beans**
- **2 large garlic cloves, sliced**
- **1tsp smoked paprika**
- **1 large lemon, zested and juiced**
- **2tbsp rapeseed oil**
- **25g walnuts, chopped**

1 Heat the oven to 220C/200C fan/gas 7. Boil the potatoes for 5 mins, drain and leave them to steam dry. Tip all of the veg, including the steam-dried potatoes, into a large shallow roasting tin where they can fit in one layer, and toss gently with the oil and thyme. Roast for 25 mins.

2 Meanwhile, make the houmous. Drain the butter beans, retaining the water. Weigh 300g of the beans and put in a bowl with the garlic, smoked paprika, 1tbsp of the rapeseed oil, 3tbsp lemon juice, 1tsp lemon zest and 3tbsp bean liquid and blitz until smooth. Add another 2tbsp bean liquid for a smoother consistency, if you like. Stir in the walnuts. In a separate small bowl, mix 1tbsp lemon juice with the remaining rapeseed oil.

3 Once the vegetables are soft, stir through the reserved beans and return the tray to the oven for 5 mins to warm through. To serve, spread half the houmous over two plates. Top with half the roasted vegetables then spoon over a little of the lemon and oil mixture, saving some for another meal. Scatter over the rocket and serve. This dish will keep chilled in an airtight container for up to three days. To serve, make sure you reheat the vegetables in a microwave until piping hot.

PROSCIUTTO, KALE & BUTTER BEAN STEW

SERVES 4 • EASY • PREP: 5 MINS • COOK: 20 MINS

Whip up this healthy stew in just 25 minutes with prosciutto, kale and butter beans. It's a low-calorie, low-fat dinner with three of your five-a-day.

- **80g pack prosciutto, torn into pieces**
- **2tbsp olive oil**
- **1 fennel bulb, sliced**
- **2 garlic clove, crushed**
- **1tsp chilli flakes**
- **4 thyme sprigs**
- **150ml white wine or chicken stock**
- **2 x 400g cans butter beans**
- **400g can cherry tomatoes**
- **200g bag sliced kale**

1 Fry the prosciutto in a dry saucepan over a high heat until crisp, then remove half with a slotted spoon. Turn the heat down to low, pour in oil and tip in the fennel with a pinch of salt. Cook for 5 mins until soft, then throw in the garlic, chilli and thyme and cook for a further 2 mins, then pour in the wine or stock and bring to a simmer.

2 Tip both cans of butter beans into the stew, along with their liquid, then add the tomatoes, season well and bring everything to a simmer. Cook, undisturbed, for 5 mins, then stir through the kale. Once wilted, ladle the stew into bowls, removing the thyme sprigs and topping each portion with the remaining prosciutto.

ROASTED CAULIFLOWER & CHICKEN CURRY

SERVES 6-8 • EASY • PREP: 20 MINS • COOK: 40 MINS

Use up a whole cauliflower in this chicken curry, then serve with cooked rice, naan or poppadom – it's perfect for a Friday night fakeaway.

- **2tbsp vegetable oil**
- **1 red onion, sliced**
- **4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, chopped**
- **3 garlic cloves, crushed or finely grated**
- **Thumb-sized piece of fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated**
- **2tsp garam masala**
- **1tsp ground cumin**
- **1tsp ground turmeric**
- **1-2 tsp chilli powder or to taste**
- **1tbsp tomato puree**
- **1tbsp soy sauce**
- **400g can chopped tomatoes**
- **400g can coconut milk**
- **Handful of chopped coriander**
- **Cooked basmati rice, naan and/or poppadoms, plus lime wedges to serve**

For the roasted cauliflower

- **1 cauliflower broken into florets, outer leaves finely sliced and core finely chopped**
- **2tbsp vegetable oil**
- **½ tsp ground cumin**
- **½ tsp ground coriander**
- **½ tsp ground turmeric**

1 Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. For the roasted cauliflower, tip the florets into a bowl, then drizzle over the oil. Scatter in the cumin, coriander and turmeric, and mix well to coat the cauliflower. Tip out on to a baking tray. Roast for 30-40 mins until the cauliflower is tender and beginning to char at the edges.

2 Meanwhile, for the curry base, heat the vegetable oil in a large pan over a medium-low heat and fry the onion, cauliflower leaves and core for 8-10 mins until softened but not golden. Stir in the chicken and turn the heat up to medium. Fry for 4-5 mins until the chicken is beginning to brown. Mix in the garlic and ginger, and cook for a couple of minutes until fragrant, then scatter in the spices and stir to combine. Cook for 1 min before mixing in the tomato puree and soy sauce followed by the tomatoes, plus a quarter of a can of water, and the coconut milk.

3 Bring the curry to a simmer and cook for 15-20 mins until the chicken is cooked through and the sauce has thickened a little. Once finished, you can either serve with the cauliflower mixed through, or divide this mixture between bowls and top with the roasted cauliflower and chopped coriander. Serve with cooked rice, naan or poppadoms and lime wedges for squeezing over.

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MEATBALL & TOMATO SOUP

SERVES 4 • EASY • PREP: 5 MINS • COOK: 15 MINS

Get three of your five-a-day in one serving with this healthy, low-calorie tomato soup. The addition of the meatballs and giant couscous means it's filling, too.

- **1½ tbsp rapeseed oil**
- **1 onion, finely chopped**
- **2 red peppers, deseeded and sliced**
- **1 garlic clove, crushed**
- **½ tsp chilli flakes**
- **2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes**
- **100g giant couscous**
- **500ml hot vegetable stock**
- **12 pork meatballs**
- **150g baby spinach**
- **½ small bunch of basil**
- **Grated parmesan to serve (optional)**

1 Heat the oil in a saucepan. Fry the onion and peppers for 7 mins, then stir through the garlic and chilli flakes and cook for 1 min. Add the tomatoes, giant couscous and veg stock and bring to a simmer.

2 Season to taste, then add the meatballs and spinach. Simmer for 5-7 mins or until cooked through. Ladle into bowls and top with the basil and some parmesan, if you like.

GROW
THE PLOT THICKENS

With **DAVID DOMONEY** *daviddomoney.com*
YouTube.com/DavidDomoney

Lift winter with window boxes

Pick the best flowers and foliage to smarten up your outside as the season really takes hold

FLOWERS *Erica carnea*

COLOUR *Viola x wittrockiana*

WINTER RED *Skimmia japonica 'Rubella'*

STRONG *Heuchera's foliage*

January has plenty of potential for adding colour to the garden. A well-planted window box puts winter flowers and evergreen foliage right at eye level, so you can enjoy it every time you pass the window. It's also a tidy way to garden in small spaces, from balconies to narrow ledges.

CHOOSE YOUR WINDOW BOX AND POSITION

If you already have a window box, empty it completely and give it a good wash. Fresh peat free compost makes a big difference to drainage and plant health, even in winter.

When you're buying new, make sure you measure the window carefully and choose a sturdy trough with proper drainage holes. If you're fixing it in place, use strong angle brackets and suitable wall plugs and screws. If your window opens outwards, keep plants low or hang the box slightly below the opening line.

PLANTS THAT LOOK GOOD IN JANUARY

Pick a mix of structure, colour, and trailing edges. Aim for plants in bud, flower, or with interesting foliage so that the display looks good instantly.

- **Erica carnea 'Myretoun Ruby'** for flowers from winter into spring.
- **Viola x wittrockiana 'Cool Wave Blueberry Swirl'** for spreading trailing colour in cool seasons.
- **Skimmia japonica 'Rubella'** for red buds and glossy evergreen leaves.
- **Heuchera 'Obsidian'** for strong foliage in a small space.
- **Ornamental kale 'Nagoya Red'** for frilled texture and bold winter colour.

HERBS IN WINTER

For outdoor winter window boxes, stick to hardy herbs like thymus 'Doone Valley' or sage 'Berggarten' in a sheltered spot.

In very exposed positions, frost and wind can damage growth. In that case, use a sunny windowsill indoors for herbs you want to pick often, and keep the window box focused on ornamentals.

STEP 1 – Clear and plan

Remove old compost and debris, then check the drainage holes are clear.

Stand your plants in the empty box while still in their pots. Put taller plants towards the back or middle, and trailers near the front and edges. Step back and check the balance of colour and height.

STEP 2 – Fix then fill

Put the box into position before filling, as it will be heavy afterwards.

If you line the box first, pierce plenty of holes for drainage. Add compost and fill to about 2-3 cm below the rim, then firm lightly.

STEP 3 – Plant, water, finish

Dig planting holes to match each rootball. Ease plants from their pots by gently squeezing the sides and tipping them out, keeping the compost intact. Plant at the same depth as before, then firm compost around each plant to remove air gaps. Water them in well, wiping the outside clean and check that water can drain freely.

COLD WEATHER AFTERCARE

Water only when the compost feels dry. Deadhead violas to keep flowers coming and remove any damaged leaves after windy weather.

With that little routine, your window box will stay colourful and fresh through January and beyond. Learn more about making a DIY window box on my YouTube channel, @daviddomoney.

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The Drew&Cole 4L Air Fryer makes healthy cooking easy while reducing energy usage. Its energy-efficient design cooks meals quickly with Cyclonic Air technology, saving time and energy. With a 4-litre capacity, it's perfect for 2-4 people. Frying with air, not oil, means enjoying crispy foods without excess calories or fats. The LED display offers 8 pre-set functions and easy customizations. Its compact design fits any countertop, and the free recipe app provides meal inspiration for healthier eating.

✓ 1500W power
✓ 8 one-touch pre-set functions
✓ Easy-to-read LED display
✓ Cool-touch handle and non-slip feet
✓ Reminder alerts and automatic shut-off
✓ Free recipe app

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Trustpilot ★★★★★

PICK 'N' MIX Think structure, colour, and trailing edges

PRETTY *Ornamental kale*

HARDY *Herbs*

TOP 5 GARDENING JOBS

1 As the new year gets going, rotate indoor citrus pots a quarter turn weekly so growth stays even and the canopy doesn't lean towards the light.

Keep plants in the brightest spot you have, avoiding cold draughts from open windows at night. Check compost moisture too, as central heating can dry pots quickly.

2 After winter winds, look up into tree canopies for hanging, split or torn branches. Remove damage promptly with clean, sharp cuts back to a suitable side branch or bud, taking off any loose bark so the wound edges are neat. Work safely and leave major limbs to a qualified tree surgeon if access is difficult.

3 On mild, still days, ventilate cold frames to reduce condensation and discourage grey mould. Prop the lid open slightly for an hour or two to let damp air escape, then close before late afternoon, especially if frost is forecast.

4 Inspect pond edges for liners lifted by frost heave or shifting soil. Ease the liner back into place, repositioning stones or edging, and top up water levels if needed. Rainwater is ideal because it's untreated and usually gentler for pond life. Tap water can alter hardness and pH and may contain chlorine, so add it slowly if you must.

5 Clean algae and grime from solar light panels and lenses so they charge well during short January days. Use a soft cloth and warm water, then adjust the angle to face the brightest part of the sky. Clear nearby leaves, moss, or stems that cast shade.

FOCUS ON

WITCH HAZEL

When winter borders need a lift, witch hazel, Hamamelis, is hard to beat.

It grows into an elegant, open shrub with a naturally arching shape. From January into early spring, its bare branches carry fine, ribbon-like flowers that catch the light on dull days. Later in the year, the foliage can turn buttery yellow, orange, or copper, so the plant offers all-year interest.

January is a great time to plant a container-grown witch hazel. Give it a bright, sheltered position with moist but well-drained ground.

Improve the planting area first by working in plenty of peat-free garden compost, then set the shrub at the same depth it grew in the pot. If space is limited, choose a variety with a reliable habit and colour, such as Hamamelis x intermedia 'Arnold Promise' or 'Jelena'. Learn more on my YouTube channel, @daviddomoney.

Fun fact: The 'witch' in witch hazel is not about witchcraft. It comes from Middle English wych (from Old English wice), meaning pliant or bendy, describing the flexible stems used for dowsing rods.

DID YOU KNOW?

Topiary, the clipping of evergreens into shapes, has been recorded since Roman times; Pliny the Elder even noted clipped cypress, and it later returned to fashion in Renaissance formal gardens.

After Christmas, recycle your real tree for wildlife: cut thick trunk sections into logs, drill smooth nesting holes of mixed diameters and fix them in a sunny, sheltered spot for solitary bees; stack the branches as a quiet log or brush pile to shelter overwintering insects, amphibians and small mammals. Leave it undisturbed until spring so residents can settle safely.

Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa) produces purple fruits called sloes, traditionally steeped in gin with sugar to make sloe gin, a classic winter liqueur. Many people freeze the fruit first to soften it.

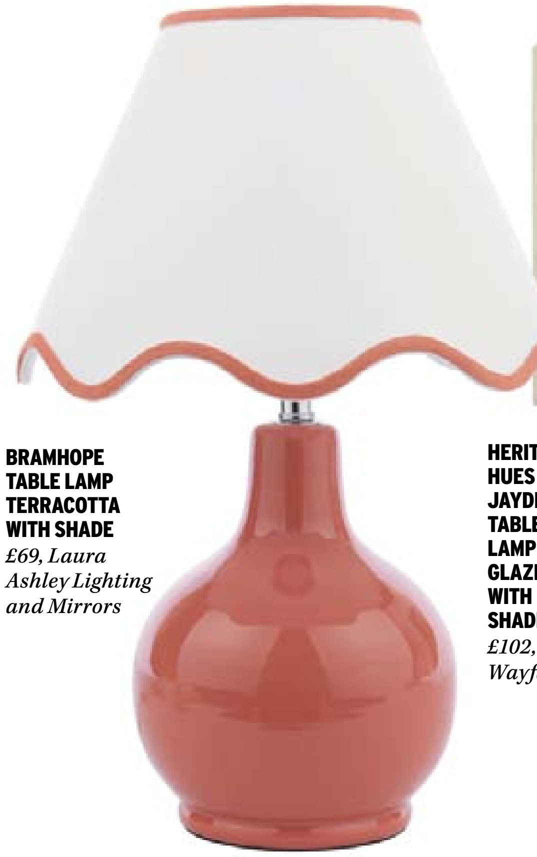
Britain's scarce native black poplar (Populus nigra subsp. betulifolia) was once common on floodplains and riverbanks. Conservation projects are working to replant it.

SHOP YOUR NEXT BUY

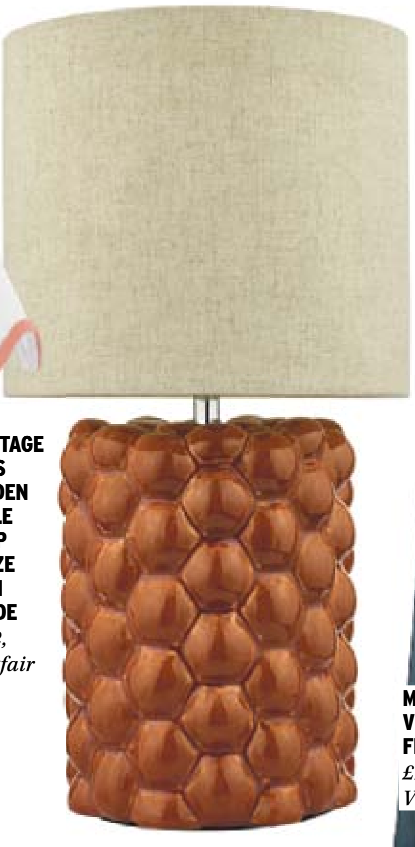
Compiled by **GRACE SALMON**

Light work

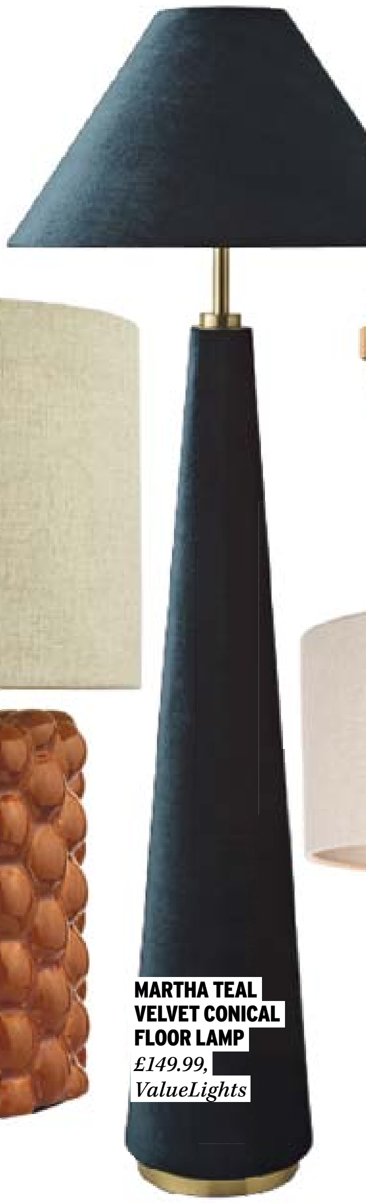
Give your home a new year refresh with some upgraded lighting. Whether brightening a cosy corner or adding a statement in the hallway, the right lamp or shade can completely transform a room



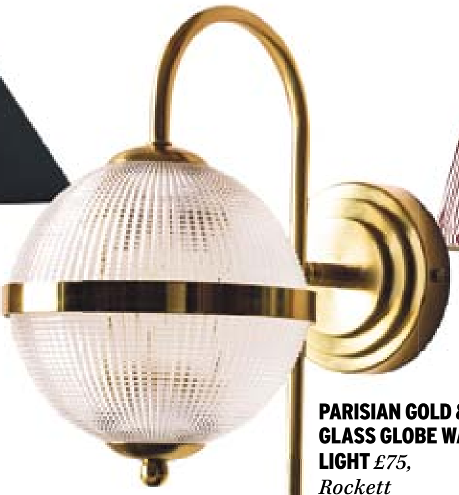
BRAMHOPE TABLE LAMP TERRACOTTA WITH SHADE *£69, Laura Ashley Lighting and Mirrors*



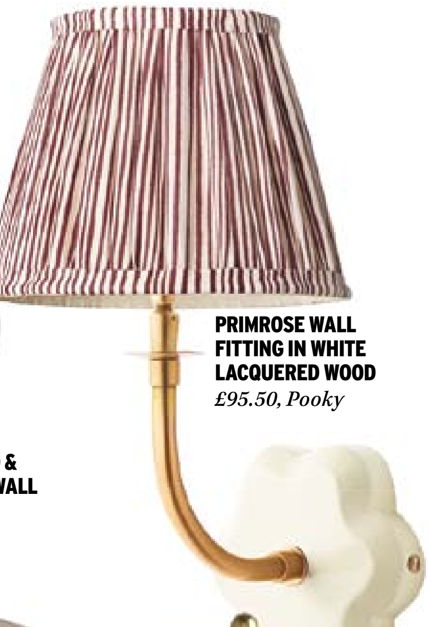
HERITAGE HUES JAYDEN TABLE LAMP GLAZE WITH SHADE *£102, Wayfair*



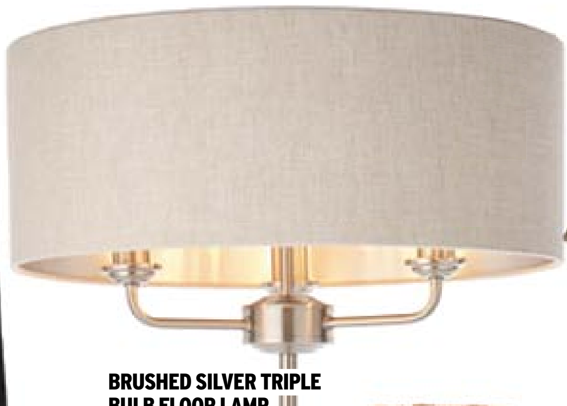
MARTHA TEAL VELVET CONICAL FLOOR LAMP *£149.99, ValueLights*



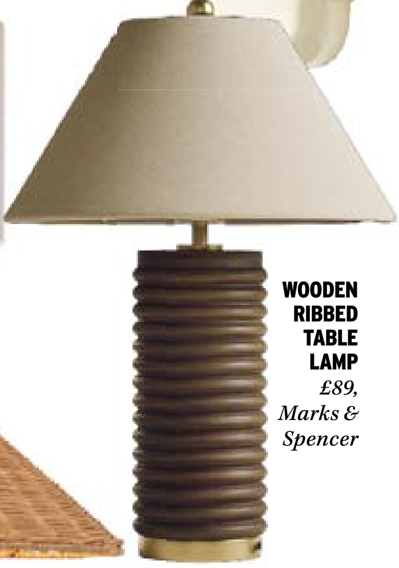
PARISIAN GOLD & GLASS GLOBE WALL LIGHT *£75, Rockett St George*



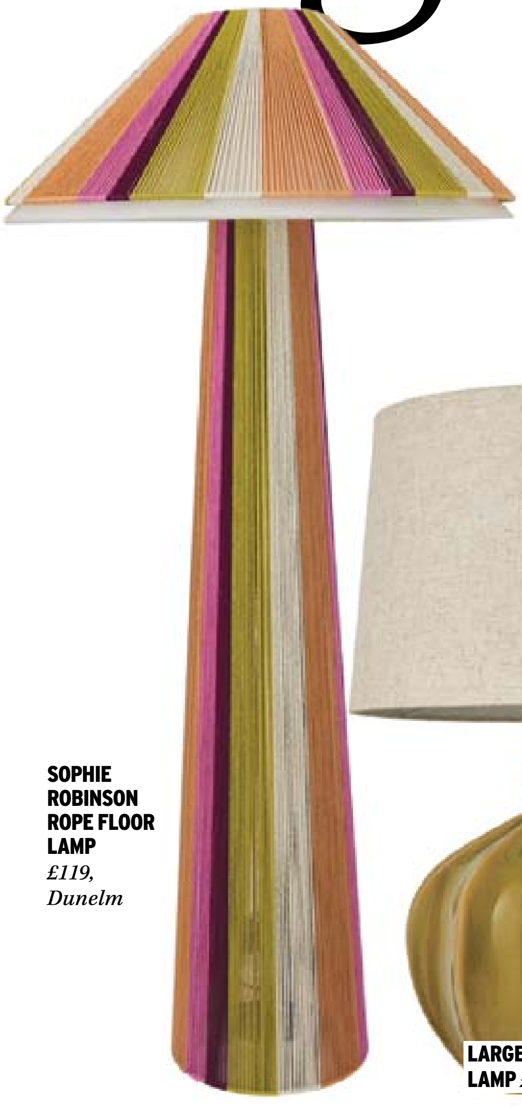
PRIMROSE WALL FITTING IN WHITE LACQUERED WOOD *£95.50, Pooky*



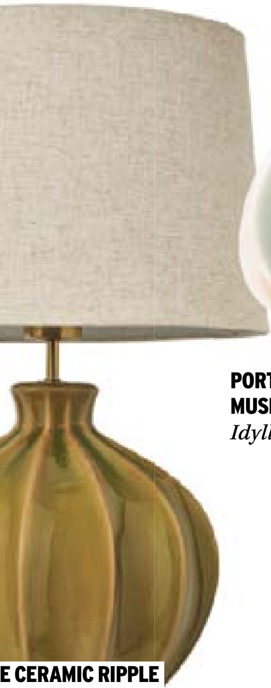
BRUSHED SILVER TRIPLE BULB FLOOR LAMP *£275, COX&COX*



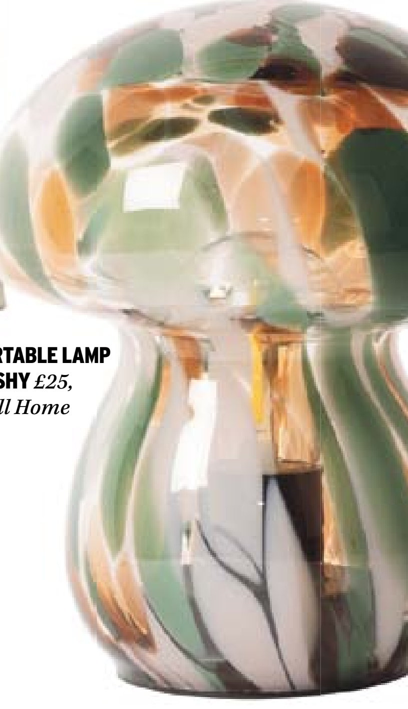
WOODEN RIBBED TABLE LAMP *£89, Marks & Spencer*



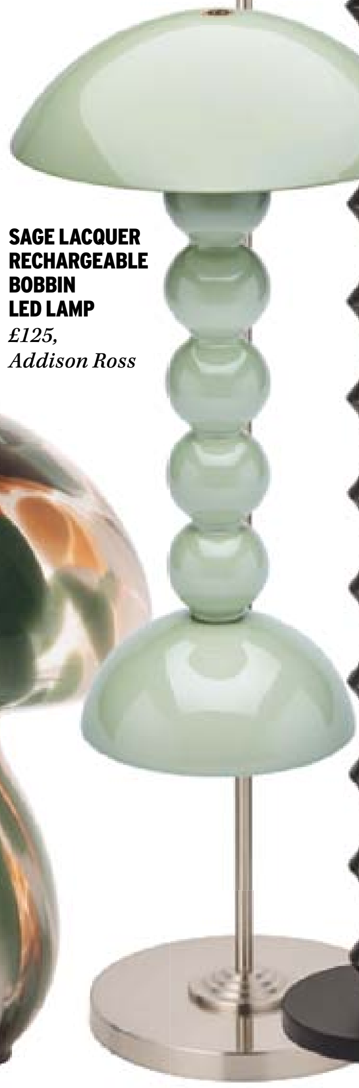
SOPHIE ROBINSON ROPE FLOOR LAMP *£119, Dunelm*



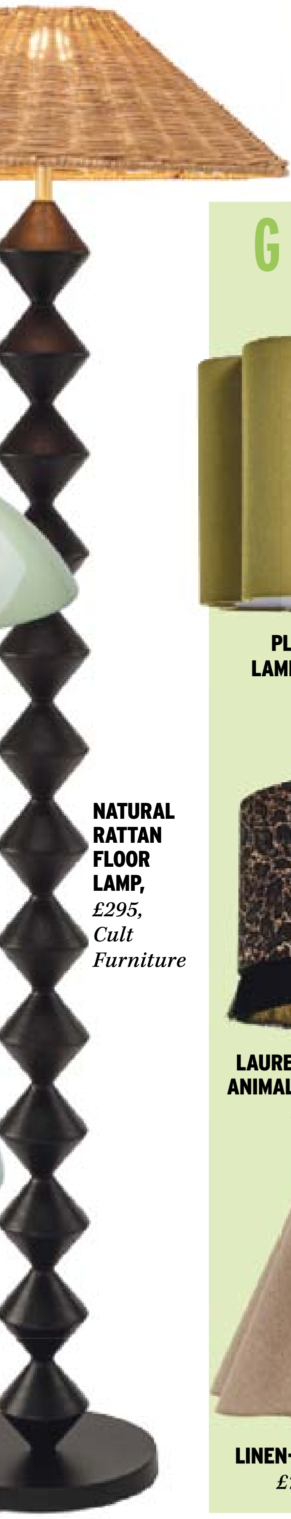
LARGE CERAMIC RIPPLE LAMP *£55, Very Home*



PORTABLE LAMP MUSHY *£25, Idyll Home*

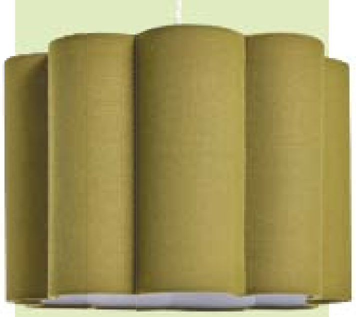


SAGE LACQUER RECHARGEABLE BOBBIN LED LAMP *£125, Addison Ross*

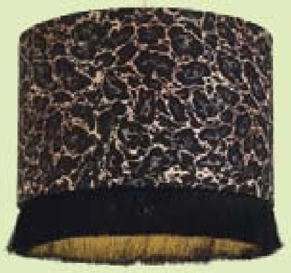


NATURAL RATTAN FLOOR LAMP, *£295, Cult Furniture*

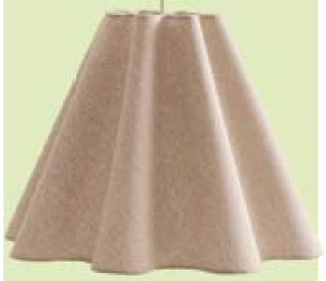
GLOW UP



PLEAT OLIVE EASYFIT LAMPSHADE *£18, Habitat*



LAURENCE LLEWELYN-BOWEN ANIMAL BLACK RACEY EASY FIT SHADE *£60, Next*



LINEN-BLEND PENDANT LIGHT *£79.99, H&M Home*

POWERED BY CITY A.M.

City & Business

AT A GLANCE

STOCK MARKET

FTSE 100	9951.1	▲	+19.8
FTSE 250	22409.2	▼	-61.2
FTSE ALL SHARE	5358.1	▲	+7.7
Shares Traded	9265.2 million		

POPULAR SHARES ON THE RISE

Abrdn	207½	+1¾
BAE Systems	1754	+40
Barclays	479½	+3½
BP	438	+5
Centrica	174¼	+4¾
GSK	1831½	+7
HSBC Holdings	1191¾	+18
Int Consolidated Airlines	420	+5¾
Lloyds Banking Group	99¼	+1
National Grid	1157½	+16
NatWest Group	657½	+5¾
Rolls-Royce Holdings	1197	+47
Sainsbury (J)	328	+3
Shell	2759½	+19½
Tesco	442¼	+½
Vodafone Group	99¼	+¼

POPULAR SHARES ON THE SLIDE

AstraZeneca	13592	-198
Aviva	683½	-1
BT Group	183¾	-¼
Convatec Group	239½	-3½
Haleon	370	-4¾
Marks & Spencer Group	328¼	-1¾
Saga	387	-4½
Unilever	4822½	-37
Whitbread	2537	-13

WORLD MARKETS

TOKYO	50339.5	▼	-187.4
HONG KONG	26338.5	▲	+707.9
GERMANY	24539.3	▲	+48.9
FRANCE	8195.2	▲	+45.7

STERLING VALUE

Dollar	1.348	▶	0.000
Yen	211.181	▲	+0.085
Euro	1.149	▲	+0.001

DOLLAR VALUE

Dollar/Yen	156.714	▲	+0.0422
Dollar/Euro	0.852	▲	+0.0009

COMMODITIES

GOLD($)	▲	4326.88
KRUGERRAND(£)	▲	3211.05
SILVER(pence)	▲	5376.83
BRENT CRUDE($)	▼	60.51

OTHER INDICATORS

Base rate	3.75%
Halifax mortgage rate	5.95%
Retail Price Index	+3.8% (CPI +3.2%)
House price Index	+1.7%
Unemployment	1,832,000

POWERED BY Digital Look www.DigitalLook.com

TOURIST'S POUND

Australia	1.96 dollar
Canada	1.80 dollar
China	8.83 renminbi
Czech Rep.	26.02 koruna
Denmark	8.13 krone
Eurozone	1.13 euro
Hong Kong	9.86 dollar
Hungary	413.52 forint
Israel	4.01 shekel
Japan	202.85 yen
Jordan	0.89 dinar
Mexico	22.92 peso
New Zealand	2.26 dollar
Norway	13.10 krone
Poland	4.60 zloty
Saudi Arabia	4.81 riyal
South Africa	21.37 rand
Sweden	11.80 krona
Switzerland	1.03 franc
Thailand	40.72 baht
Turkey	53.87 lira
United States	1.32 dollar

Are new orders signs of a manufacturing recovery?

By **Samuel Norman**

MANUFACTURING edged closer to recovery at the end of 2025 thanks to an influx of new orders.

S&P Global UK's survey of purchasing managers recorded a score of 50.6 – a 15-month high. That was up on November's 50.2 though below an estimate of 51.2, But both readings topped the important 50 mark, which indicates whether a sector is growing.

Confidence rose in December as new orders and output grew and suppliers' delivery times lengthened. But this was tempered by a fall in employment and stock purchases.

Rob Dobson, director at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said: "Manufacturers benefited from several reduced headwinds towards the end of the year, as the negative impacts of the uncertainty surrounding the autumn Budget, tariffs and the Jaguar Land Rover cyber attack all moderated."

Rob Dobson is looking ahead

The sector had feared Chancellor Rachel Reeves would raid industry for tax, while manufacturing body Make UK warned of an "existential threat" to many companies due to the increasing price of industrial electricity.

The hacking of JLR, which halted car production, is estimated to have cost the UK around £1.9billion. The Cyber Monitoring Centre says nearly 5,000 organisations were caught in the fallout.

The restart of its factories and the avoidance of major tax raids handed the sector a major boost. Mr Dobson said: "The start of 2026 will show if growth can be sustained after these temporary boosts."

The survey showed domestic work powered growth while orders from overseas fell for the 47th successive month.

Despite the better picture, producers' optimism fell for the first time in three months in December – as did employment in the sector.

The PMI said: "Manufacturers reported they remain concerned about high costs, increased taxation, reduced international competitiveness, geopolitical uncertainty and the possible impact of government policy."

Make UK has warned of the consequences of the Employment Rights Bill and inheritance tax raid on family firms though Labour has made significant U-turns on both policies.

VERY LAST ORDERS FOR 366 PUBS

More venues will fail as the struggling sector faces costs pressure

ONE pub a day shut for good last year as businesses battled mounting cost pressures and increasingly heavy taxes.

In total, 366 were demolished or converted for other uses, according to analysis by global tax firm Ryan. It found that in the past five years, nearly 2,000 closed – around 5% of the 40,617 venues that were open at the beginning of 2020.

Alex Probyn, a property tax expert at Ryan, said the figures are a stark reminder of the perilous state of the sector and hospitality in general, which is gearing up for yet another jump in costs this year.

"This data should serve as a wake-up call," he added. "It reflects deep structural pressures on pubs."

VOLATILE YEAR: For buyers

House price growth slows amid Budget tax hikes

THE UK housing market rounded off 2025 on a softer note after remaining "resilient" through a volatile year, Nationwide's house price index reveals.

Annual house price growth slowed to 0.6% in December from 1.8% in November, with a 0.4% drop in prices in the month. This took the average property price to £271,068 in December, said the building society.

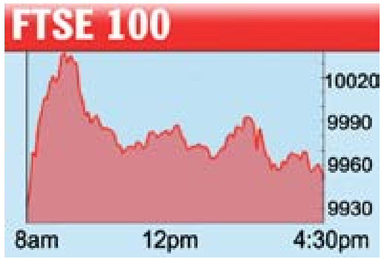
Meanwhile the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors found that buyer sentiment was dented in November by property tax rumours and the hit to households' income in the Budget.

Several possible tax hikes were floated before the Chancellor pushed ahead with a "high-value council tax surcharge" on all properties valued at over £2million.

Robert Gardner, Nationwide's chief economist, said: "The word that best describes the housing market in 2025 overall is 'resilient'."

++ THE FTSE 100 THE FTSE 100 THE FTSE 100 ++

			52 WEEK	
COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	HIGH	LOW
3i Group	3210#	-53	4459	2999
A.B. Foods	2125#	-2	2337	1841½
Admiral Group	†			
Airtel Africa	361½	+6½	364½	114½
Alliance Trust	1274	-8	1324	1050
Anglo American	3040	-45	3149	2003¾
Antofagasta	3256	-23	3356	1383
Ashtead Group	5100	+14	5849¾	3659
AstraZeneca	13592	-198	14148	9667
Auto Trader	575½#	-11	908½	572½
Aviva	683½	-1	692½	468¾
Babcock International	1273#	+30	1330	485¾
BAE Systems	1754	+40	2060	1145½
Barclays	479½	+3½	482½	241¾
Barratt Development	379	-2	482¼	350
Beazley Group	817	-15	973	769
Berkeley Grp Hldgs	3932	+28	4324	3462
BP	438	+5	476¼	331¾
British Amer.Tob	4189#	-25	4421	2905
British Land	397½#	-6½	420½	321¼
BT Group	183¾#	-¼	222¾	138¼
Bunzl	2064#	-12	3452	2042
Burberry Group	1316½	+47½	1371½	627¾
Centrica	174¼	+4¾	180	132¼
Coca-Cola HBC	3768	-74	4034	2708
Compass Group	2334	-30	2843	2319
Convatec Group	239½	-3½	295½	219¼
CRH	9328	+24	9512	6142
Croda International	2742	+47	3383	2465
DCC	4544	-86	5600	4528
Diageo	1607½	+4	2555	1581½
Diploma	5295		5650	3624
EasyJet	513¾	+3¼	587¾	427½
Entain	771½	+4¾	1022	501¼
Experian Group	3332	-31	4088	3091
F&C Inv Tst	1253#	+1	1260	962
Flutter Entert.	16120	-10	23630	14670
Fresnillo	3352	+18	3514	644
Games Workshop	18440#	-480	19840	12410
GlaxoSmithKline	1831½#	+7	1849	1264
Glencore	408¾	+2¼	417½	230
Haleon	370	-4¾	415¼	326½
Halma	3500#	-38	3658	2360
Hikma	1523	-27	2340	1507
Hiscox	1398	-25	1429	1035
HSBC Holdings	1191¾	+18	1200	713¼
IMI	2500	+12	2524	1606
Imperial Brands	3125	+6	3312	2579
Informa	874	-10	993½	640¼
InterContinental Htl	10275	-103572510957¾		5509¾
Intermediate Cap.Grp	2056#	+2	2450	1569
Intertek Group	4554	-72	5385	4064
Intl Consolidated Airlines	420	+5¾	430½	224½
JD Sports	85¾	+1¼	104½	63¼
Kingfisher	316½	+3¾	317	228¼
Land Securities	619½#	-2½	650	499½
Legal & General	262½	+½	264½	215¼
Lloyds Banking Grp	99¼	+1	100¼	53
London & Stamford Prop.	188½#	-1	204½	170½
London Stock Ex	8804	-148	12095	8138
M&G	291½	+5	291¾	172¾
Marks & Spencer	328¼#	-1¾	411¼	318½
Melrose	610	+21½	680	386
Mondi	918¾	+10½	1326	819
National Grid	1157½#	+16	1182	910¾
NatWest Group	657½	+5¾	662¾	374½
Next	13535#	-145	14580	9028
Pearson	1019½	-30½	1379	984½
Pershing Square Hold	4824	-22	5090	3244
Persimmon	1359½	+1	1405	1037½
Phoenix Group	743	+6	745	479½
Prudential	1155	+10½	1172½	595¼
Reckitt Benckiser	5982	-20	6080	4633
RELX	2983	-37	4135	2970
Rentokil Initial	443½	-4	448½	309½
Rightmove	512¼	-7½	823¾	507¾
Rio Tinto	5986	-8	6058	4117
Rolls-Royce Group	1197	+47	1198	563½
Sage Group	1050	-33	1348	1049
Sainsbury (J)	328	+3	355¾	228¾
Schroders	408½	+1½	428¼	289¼
Scottish Mortgage	1182	-4	1197½	815¼
SEGRO	712½	-7¾	732¼	599
Severn Trent	2813#	+24	2852	2338
Shell	2759½	+19½	2931½	2291½
Smith & Nephew	1217½	-21	1435	937¾
Smiths Group	2372	+20	2550	1687
Smurfit Kappa	2920	+49	4495	2558
Spirax-Sarco	6840	+20	8190	5445
SSE	2231#	+52	2307	1463½
St James's Place	1423½	+39	1426	791
Standard Chartered	1844	+22	1855½	878¾
Tesco	442¼	+½	475½	314½
Unilever	4822½	-37	6177½	4793½
United Utilities	1206#	+12	1237	937½
Vodafone Group	99¼#	+¼	100½	64
Weir Group	2872	+26	2990	1984
Whitbread	2537	-13	3274	2335



Record Xmas is a nice Lidl earner...

LIDL cheered record Christmas sales – up 10% after nearly 51 million customers came through its doors.

The German chain turned over more than £1.1billion in the four weeks to Christmas Eve.

Shopper numbers rose 8% year-on-year, almost four million more than a year earlier when the sales were up 7%.

Lidl said December 23 was its busiest day and it sold 11,000 tons of seasonal produce in the final week up to Christmas Eve – up 70% on 2024.

Easy peeler clementines and Comte de Senneval champagne were top sellers, driven by loyalty scheme Lidl Plus, which had a 28% jump in active members in November.

Chief executive Ryan McDonnell said the group, which opened 40 more shops in 2025, would continue to expand this year.

+ BG + Barclays + BT + Centrica + Dixons Carphone + First Group + HSBC + Kingfisher + Marks & Spencer + Next + Prudential + Rolls-Royce + Sainsburys + Tesco + Unilever + Vodafone + Whitbread + WPP

SHARES AT A GLANCE

Aerospace & Defence

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Avon Rubber	1804	-10	2180	1338
Babcock International	1273#	+30	1330	485¾
BAE Systems	1754	+40	2060	1145½
Chemring Group	473	+½	593	297½
QinetiQ Group	444½	+2¾	572	361
Rolls-Royce Group	1197	+47	1198	563½
Senior	202	+7¼	202	115¾

Alternative Energy

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Porvair	836	-10	856	626

Banks

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Barclays	479½	+3½	482½	241¾
Bco Santander	884	+3	893	362
Close Brothers	526	+3½	550½	208
HSBC Holdings	1191¾	+18	1200	713¼
Investec	568½	+17	596	414
Lloyds Banking Grp	99¼	+1	100¼	53
Metro Bank	119½	-1¼	133½	81
NatWest Group	657½	+5¾	662¾	374½
Paragon Group	859½	+5	970	686½
Standard Chartered	1844	+22	1855½	878¾

Beverages

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Barr (AG)	617	-7	711	558
Coca-Cola HBC	3768	-74	4034	2708
Diageo	1607½	+4	2555	1581½

Chemicals

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Carclo	52	+1	80	21
Croda International	2742	+47	3383	2465
Elementis	166½	+½	176½	115
Johnson Matthey	2184#	+52	2198	1156
Synthomer	63½		158½	46
Treatt	204		470	186½
Victrex	660	+5	1068	589

Construction & Materials

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Balfour Beatty	714	+3	721½	390½
Costain Group	157¼	-2½	168	86
CRH	9328	+24	9512	6142
Dialight	347	-3	350	89
Galliford Try	512	-8	539	321
Gleeson (MJ)	422	+2	538	320
Keller Group	1646	-20	1678	1240
Kier Group	216½	-5½	231½	115¼
Marshalls	177¼	-3½	293	162
Morgan Sindall	4635	-15	4975	2945
Severfield-Rowen	28	-¾	52¼	19
Smart (J) & Co	132½#		132½	110

Electricity

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Drax Group	845	+8	850	536½
SSE	2231#	+52	2307	1463½
Telecom Plus	1340	-18	2085	1335½

Electronic & Electrical Equipment

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Acal	591#	-9	738	486
Halma	3500#	-38	3658	2360
Oxford Instruments	2055#	+5	2165	1500
Renishaw	3550	+40	3725	2145
TT Electronics	118	+3½	154	73
XP Power	894	-6	1314	621

Equity Investment Instruments

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Aberdeen Asian Sml	371	+7	380	256
Aberforth Smll.Co.	1580	+6	1588	1212
Acorn Income	367½			
Albion Tech.& Gen. VCT	66		71	65½
Alliance Trust	1274	-8	1324	1050
Aurora Inv.Tst.	272		272½	212½
AVI Global Tst	258#	+½	266½	202
Baillie Gifford Japan	898		951	657
Baillie Gifford Shin Nip	131	-½	136½	95½
Bankers Inv.Tst	132½	-½	135	101
Baronsmead VCT.2	48½		52	46½
BH Macro GBP	401	+2	414	371½
Biotech Growth Trust	1200		1285	620
BlackRock Mining	835	+31	855	406½
Bluehone AiM VCT2	28¼#		31	27¼
British Assets Tst	26½		49¼	26
Brunner Inv.Tst.	1432	+2	1458	1140
Caledonia Inv.	380#	-1	391½	334½
City Natural Res.Yld	354	-1	359	165¾
City Of London	532	+4	536	411½
Dunedin Ent.IT.				
Dunedin Income	305		309	262
Edin Wwide Inv	213		219	143
Edin.Inv.Tst.	820	-2	839	680
Edin.US Tracker	369½#	+1½	372½	289½
Elderstreet VCT	38¾		41	36¾
F&C Cap&Inc.	346½	+1½	352	287
F&C Inv Tst	1253#	+1	1260	962
F&C Smaller Cos	176½#	-½	177½	136½
F&C US Smaller Companies	1387½	-2½	1522½	1115
Fidelity Asian	608	+12	628	454
Fidelity European	421	+4½	431	338½
Fidelity Special	419#	+1	421½	295½
Finsbury Gwth&In	816	-6	962	795
Foresight Tech.VCT	65½		75½	62
Genesis E.M.F.	1084	+18	1090	632
Graphite Ent	1502	+14	1600	1070
Hansa Tst 'A'	267		272	190
Hansa Tst Plc	272	-1	278	192½
Henderson Far Est	245½	+6	253½	190½
Henderson High Inc	190¼#	+2¾	191	151
Herald Inv.Tst.	2405		2560	1738
HGCapital Tst.	504	-3	538	448
HSBC Infrastructure	115¾	-½	125¼	106
Impax Env.Mkt	398½	+2	416½	310½
Int.Biotech.Tst.	966#	+2	996	480
International Public	125	-¼	127¾	107¾
Invesco Asia	435#	+11	437¾	300
Invesco Perp UK	370		390	313½
JPM American	1108	-14	1186	869
JPM Asian	456½	+15½	459½	331½
JPM Claverhouse	868	+2	877¼	660
JPM Emerg Mkt	139½	+2¼	140½	95
JPM Euro Sml Co.	598#	+1	601	444½
JPM Global Emerging	173#	+2	173½	118½
JPM Indian	1024	+6	1106	904
JPM Japanese	690#		747	493
JPM Overseas IT	573	-1	610	480
JPM Smaller Co	321#		338	253
JPM US Sml Co.	400		516	338
Jupiter Euro.	894	-5	959	757
JZ Capital Partners	189		220	184
Law Debenture	1064#	+10	1074	788
Lowland Invest Co	160½#	+1½	161¾	114½
Majedie Inv.	268		282	230
Manchester&Lon.	794	-5	944	512
Martin Currie Prtflo Tst.	351	-3½	386	295
Maven Income And Growth VCT	33½#		38	32½
Mercantile Inv Tst	254½#	-3	260	202½
Merchants Tst	599	+3	603	474
Mid Wynd Int.	768	-8	836	664
Monks Inv.Tst.	1486	-14	1548	1036
Montanaro Euro Tst	165#	-1½	183½	138
Montanaro Uk	100¼	-1¼	106½	87¾
Murray Inc.Tst.	916	+3	938	754
Murray Int.Tst	333½#	-1½	336	239
New India	786	+2	832	686
New Star Inv.Tst.	123½	-½	125½	100
North Atl.Smlr.Tst				
Northern 2 VCT	53½#		57	52½
Northern Venture	56½#		58½	55½
Oxford Tech 2 VCT	6½		7½	5½
Pacific Assets	368	+8	378	302
Pacific Horizon	797	+17	801¾	507
Pantheon Int.	379	+1	380½	266
Pershing Square Hold	4824	-22	5090	3244
Polar Cap.Tech	463	-1	481	255½
RCM Technology Trust	524	-3	548	307
RIT Capital Partners	2245	-25	2280	1722
Ruffer Investment	294½	+½	304	264
Schroder Asia	673#	+15	678	461½
Schroder Inc.	348½#	+½	354	255
Schroder Japan	313#		315	209
Schroder UK	204		209	158½
Schroder UK M&S	708		718	520
Scottish American	509	-7	525	454½
Scottish Mortgage	1182	-4	1197½	815¼
Shires Inc.	311½#	-5	316½	222
Small Comp Div.Tst	139½#	-2½	161	124
Standard Life Equity	404#		406	288½
Standard Life UK Sml	502	-2	531	426
Temple Bar	381½	+3	383	258
Templeton Emrg.	239#	+4	241	151¾
The European Inv.Tst	109	+½	109	84
Throgmorton Tst.	617	-7	629	469
TR Euro.Growth	217½	+1	221	163
TR Prop. IT	316#	-1	338½	277½
Witan Pacific	314	+6½	322	214
Wwide Healthcare	373#	-2½	397	265½

Financial Services

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
3i Group	3210#	-53	4459	2999
3i Infrastructure	375#	+1	377	301
Abrdn	207½	+1¾	210¼	123¾
Ashmore Group	175	-1½	193	125
Guinness Peat Group	83½	-1	96	68¼
IG Group	1306	-9	1322	913
Intermediate Cap.Grp.	2056#	+2	2450	1569
International Pers Fin	234		234½	121½
IP Group	58	-½	65	34¾
Jupiter Fund Man.	159½	+¾	160	68
Liontrust Asset Man	264½#	-1	476	248
London Stock Ex.	8804	-148	12095	8138
M&G	291½	+5	291¾	172¾
Man Group	231	+2¼	232	154¾
Provident Financial	118½	-1	128½	45
Rathbone Brothers	1914	-16	1944	1406
S & U	2200	+120	2215½	1330
Schroders	408½	+1½	428¼	289¼
St James's Place	1423½	+39	1426	791
Tullett Prebon	253	-6½	311½	228
Walker Crips Group	13¼		16½	7½

Fixed Line Telecommunications

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Airtel Africa	361½	+6½	364½	114½
BT Group	183¾#	-¼	222¾	138¼

Food & Drug Retailers

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Greggs	1677	-3	2832	1418
Marks & Spencer	328¼#	-1¾	411¼	318½
Ocado	235¼	-¾	395½	172¼
Sainsbury (J)	328	+3	355¾	228¾
Tesco	442¼	+½	475½	314½

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Food Producers

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
A.B. Foods	2125#	-2	2337	1841½
Anglo-Eastern	1405	+35	1425	602
Carr's Milling	139	+5½	157	101½
Cranswick	4935#	-20	5490	4625
Glanbia	1262½	-52¼	1375¾	792¼
Greencore Group	245½	-8½	278½	169¼
Kerry Grp 'A' Shs	6687	+243¾	8794	6425¾
Premier Foods	169½	-3¼	214½	168¾
REA Holdings	125	+1½	132	61½
Tate & Lyle	367#	-7¾	661	358

Gas, Water & Multiutilities

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Centrica	174¼	+4¾	180	132¼
National Grid	1157½#	+16	1182	910¾
Pennon Group	531½	+4	552	387½
Severn Trent	2813#	+24	2852	2338
United Utilities	1206#	+12	1237	937½

General Industrials

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Bunzl	2064#	-12	3452	2042
Goodwin	21500	+200	23300	6180
Melrose	610	+21½	680	386
Mondi	918¾	+10½	1326	819
Smiths Group	2372	+20	2550	1687
Smurfit Kappa	2920	+49	4495	2558

General Retailers

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
ASOS	285	+1½	436½	218½
Auto Trader	575½#	-11	908½	572½
B&M Europ Value Ret	165	-3¾	364½	155¼
Caffyns	425#	+10	500	415
Dixons Carphone	126¾#	+¾	146	82
Dunelm	1117	-13	1232	858½
Frasers Group	670	-8	770	546
Halfords Group	139½#	-1¼	174½	116¼
Headlam Group	46¾	-¼	142½	46¼
Howden Joinery	839	+6½	914½	679½
Inchcape	769½	+½	808	638
JD Sports	85¾	+1¼	104½	63¼
Kingfisher	316½	+3¾	317	228¼
Next	13535#	-145	14580	9028
Pets At Home	195¼#	-2¾	273¼	192½
RM Group	114		118	82
Topps Tiles	43¾#	+3¾	50	29
WH Smith	639		1307	613½

Health Care Equipment & Services

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Convatec Group	239½	-3½	295½	219¼
Flying Brands	+¾		2	+½
Smith & Nephew	1217½	-21	1435	937¾

Household Goods & Home Construction

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Barratt Development	379	-2	482¼	350
Bellway	2740#	-4	2982	2166
Berkeley Grp Hldgs	3932	+28	4324	3462
Bovis Homes	642¼	+¾	698	510¾
Mcbride	146	-½	159	99¼
Persimmon	1359½	+1	1405	1037½
Reckitt Benckiser	5982	-20	6080	4633
Taylor Wimpey	107¼	-¼	123¼	93

Industrial Engineering

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Bodycote	710	+12	714	460½
Hill & Smith	2155#	+15	2265	1530
IMI	2500	+12	2524	1606
Morgan Crucible	222	+4	274	177½
Northgate	380#	-3½	395	273½
Rotork	325½		352	275¾
Spirax-Sarco	6840	+20	8190	5445
Vesuvius	399¾	+3	421	313¾
Weir Group	2872	+26	2990	1984
Xaar	102	-4	145	59

Industrial Metals & Mining

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Castings	276#	+4	319	234
Evraz				
Ferrexpo	72¾	-1¼	110¾	44¼

Industrial Transportation

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Braemar Shipping Serv	219½#	+4½	278	201
Clarkson	3785	-30	4505	2995
FirstGroup	188¾	-1¾	233	146½
Fisher (J) & Sons	368	-7	403	285

Leisure Goods

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Games Workshop	18440#	-480	19840	12410
Photo-Me Intl.	146¼	-4¾	230	146¼

Life Insurance

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Aviva	683½	-1	692½	468¾
Chesnara	299	-2	301½	212¾
Legal & General	262½	+½	264½	215¼
Phoenix Group	743	+6	745	479½
Prudential	1155	+10½	1172½	595¼

Media

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
4imprint Group	3770	-75	6030	3035
Bloomsbury Publish.	473½	-8½	672	468
Future	517	-9½	1029	516
Informa	874	-10	993½	640¼
ITV	80½	-2	87¾	66¼
Pearson	1019½	-30½	1379	984½
Reach	55	-¼	88¼	53
STV Group	108½	+3	218	103
Wilmington Group	312	+16	389	289½
WPP Group	337½		830½	269

Mining

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Anglo American	3040	-45	3149	2003¾
Anglo Pacific	112¼	-2½	116¾	50
Antofagasta	3256	-23	3356	1383
BHP Billiton	2268	+9	2291	1609½
Endeavour Mining	3650	-222	3986	1460
Fresnillo	3352	+18	3514	644
Gem Diamonds	3		12	2¾
Glencore	408¾	+2¼	417½	230
Hochschild Mining	489½	-24	530	168
Kenmare Res.	250	+3	436	227
Petra Diamonds	18	+1	30½	10½
Rio Tinto	5986	-8	6058	4117

Mobile Telecommunications

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Vodafone Group	99¼#	+¼	100½	64

Nonequity Investment Instruments

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Oryx Int.Gwth.	1262½	+30	1392½	1042½
Rights &Iss.Inc	2040		2420	1670

Nonlife Insurance

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Admiral Group				
Beazley Group	817	-15	973	769
Hiscox	1398	-25	1429	1035
Lancashire	617	-24	694	523

Oil & Gas Producers

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
BP	438	+5	476¼	331¾
Cairn Energy	185	-10¼	331½	183
Enquest	10¾	+¼	16½	9¾
Gulf Keystone Pet.	175½	-1½	224½	148¾
Harbour Energy	199½	+3	294	151¼
Shell	2759½	+19½	2931½	2291½
Soco International	20¼#	-1	27½	18
Tullow Oil	6½	+¼	24½	4

Oil Equipment, Services & Distribution

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Hunting	373½	+3	396	246½
John Wood Group	24	+¼	72½	17¼

Personal Goods

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Burberry Group	1316½	+47½	1371½	627¾
PZ Cussons	72¼	-1½	88¼	66
Unilever	4822½	-37	6177½	4793½

Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
AstraZeneca	13592	-198	14148	9667
Genus	2545	-50	2715	1424
GlaxoSmithKline	1831½#	+7	1849	1264
Haleon	370	-4¾	415¼	326½
Hikma	1523	-27	2340	1507
Ovoca Gold	1¼			
Oxford Biomedica	655	+38	682	232½

Real Estate Investment & Services

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Boot (Henry)	222	-3	237	196
Cardiff Property	2700		2700	2450
CLS Holdings	60½	+¼	80½	53½
Foxtons	57¾	-1¾	68½	52¼
Harworth Group	165	-2	189½	158½
Mountview Est.	9150	+125	10200	8600
Panther Secs.	285	-5	320	274½
Rightmove	512¼	-7½	823¾	507¾
Savills	983	-13	1110	871
Wynnstay Props.	870		870	680

Real Estate Investment Trusts

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Big Yellow Group	1012#	-34	1180	848
British Land	397½#	-6½	420½	321¼
Capital & Counties	143	-2	161¼	113½
Derwent London	1735	-4	2096	1608
Grainger	181	-1¼	228	177½
Great Portland Est.	314½#	-4	363	262
Hammerson	326½	-3½	330	220½
Helical Bar	187#	-1½	240	171¾
Land Securities	619½#	-2½	650	499½
London & Stamford Prop	188½#	-1	204½	170½
Primary Health	98	+¼	103½	86¼
SEGRO	712½	-7¾	732¼	599
Town Centre	124½#	-1½	149	117
Unite Group	550	-9½	879½	510
Value & Income	198#	-5½	215	173
Workspace Group	394	-5	495	362

Software & Computer Services

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Computacenter	2920	-10	3064	2024
Intec Telecom				
Microgen	294		344	255
Moneysupermarket	181¼	-2½	221½	180½
Pendragon	351½	-6½	558	296
RELX	2983	-37	4135	2970
Sage Group	1050	-33	1348	1049
Triad Group	260		400	240

Support Services

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Ashtead Group	5100	+14	5849¾	3659
Capita Group	403½	-2	412	175
DCC	4544	-86	5600	4528
Diploma	5295		5650	3624
Essentra	96	-½	131½	89¾
Experian Group	3332	-31	4088	3091
Ferguson	16550#	-60	19470	11670
Hays	54¾	-1½	88¼	52
Intertek Group	4554	-72	5385	4064
Johnson Service	132½	-2½	159½	122¾
London Security	2750		3800	2750
Macfarlane Group	72		120½	62¾
Mears Group	354	-4	417½	311½
Michael Page	233½	-1¾	343	219½
Mitie Group	165	-1½	169¼	106½
Norish	18½		18¾	14
Paypoint	460	-13½	853	438½
Rentokil Initial	443½	-4	448½	309½
Robert Walters	140	+4	333	116
RS Group	621#	-3	684	487¼
Serco Group	274¼	-5	281	147
SIG	10¼	+¼	18	8½
Smiths News	77½	+1¾	78	47½
Speedy Hire	25#		32¼	18
SThree	185	-6	293	137½
Travis Perkins	636½	+1	714	494
Trifast	70	+1½	87½	59
Vitec Group	11		149	11

Technology Hardware & Equipment

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
BATM Advanced	16		19¾	13

Tobacco

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
British Amer.Tob	4189#	-25	4421	2905
Imperial Brands	3125	+6	3312	2579

Travel & Leisure

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
888 Holdings	22¼		74	21
Carnival	2274	+6	2358	1134
Celtic	199		204	142½
Compass Group	2334	-30	2843	2319
Domino's Pizza	173	-¼	310	167¼
EasyJet	513¾	+3¼	587¾	427½
Entain	771½	+4¾	1022	501¼
Flutter Entert.	16120	-10	23630	14670
Fuller Smith & Turner	716#	-4	728	508
Heavitree	220		280	200
InterContinental Htl	10273¼	-765886¾10956 5508¾		
Intl Consolidated Airlines	420	+5¾	430½	224½
Irish Continental Uts	535	-5	560	380
Marston's	60½	+1½	62¼	33¼
Mitchells & Butlers	264½	+3	291½	208½
National Express	22¼	-1	80½	21
Rank Group	97	-2¼	160½	77¾
Saga	387	-4½	402	111½
Wetherspoon (JD)	743	+5½	804	541
Whitbread	2537	-13	3274	2335

AIM

COMPANY	CLOSE	+/-	52 WEEK HIGH	52 WEEK LOW
Alumasc Group	259	+4	395	232
Arbuthnot Banking	887½	+7½	1100	837½
Boohoo	23	-¼	32¾	10½
Camellia	4980	-25	6050	4090
Churchill China	335	-5	725	330
CML Microsystems	295	-5	335	210
Colefax Group	960	+10	960	750
CPP Group	74	+3½	162	68½
Cropper (James)	398	+73	414½	132½
Falkland Islands	240		316¾	162½
Fevertree Drinks	805	-14	998	611½
Filtronic	181	+5	181	74¾
James Halstead	137		181½	133
Mothercare	2½		4¼	2¼
Mpac Group	310	+5	586	270
Naked Wine	72½	+½	93½	43
Nichols	934	-20	1465	930
Northamber	32½		34	26
Portmeirion	94		189	93¼
Regal Petroleum	17	-½	26½	14½
Rockhopper Exploratn	72	+1¾	87¾	27½
Ten Alps	47½		73	47½
Titon Holdings	92½		95	69
Volex	413#	-5	428½	198¾
Young & Co Brewery A	748	+8	992	714

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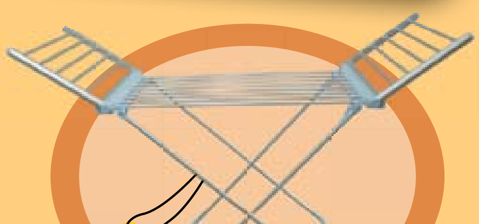

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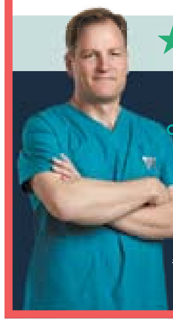

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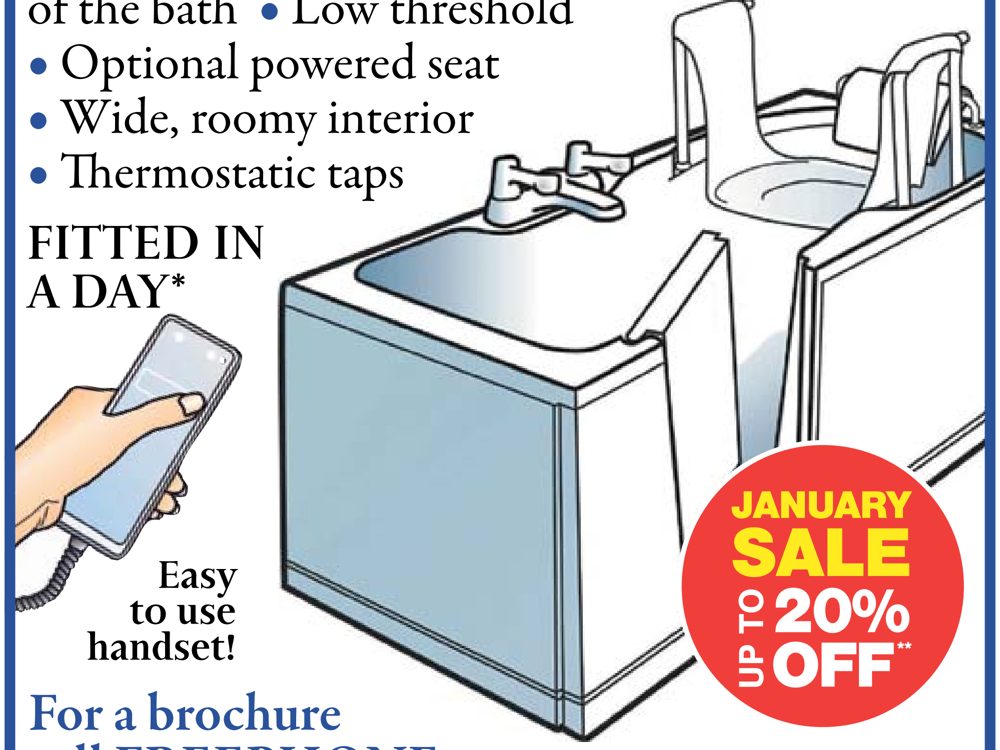

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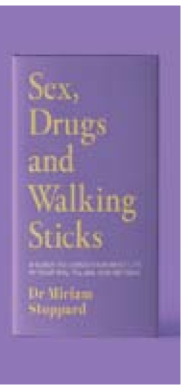
Sex, Drugs and Walking Sticks

by Dr Miriam Stoppard


Sex, Drugs and Walking Sticks
Dr Miriam Stoppard

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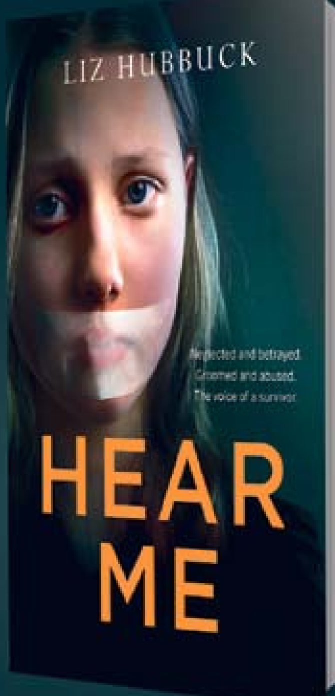
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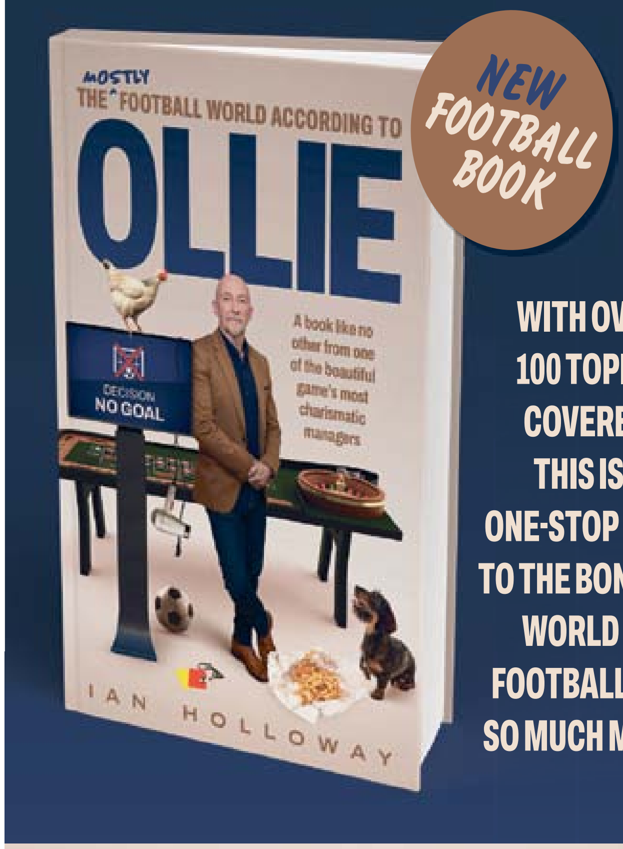
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DYEXP03/01/26q

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Charting Rob's weird and wonderful betting exploits, this amusing memoir tells the remarkable true-life tale of one man's quest to defy the odds

AMAZON

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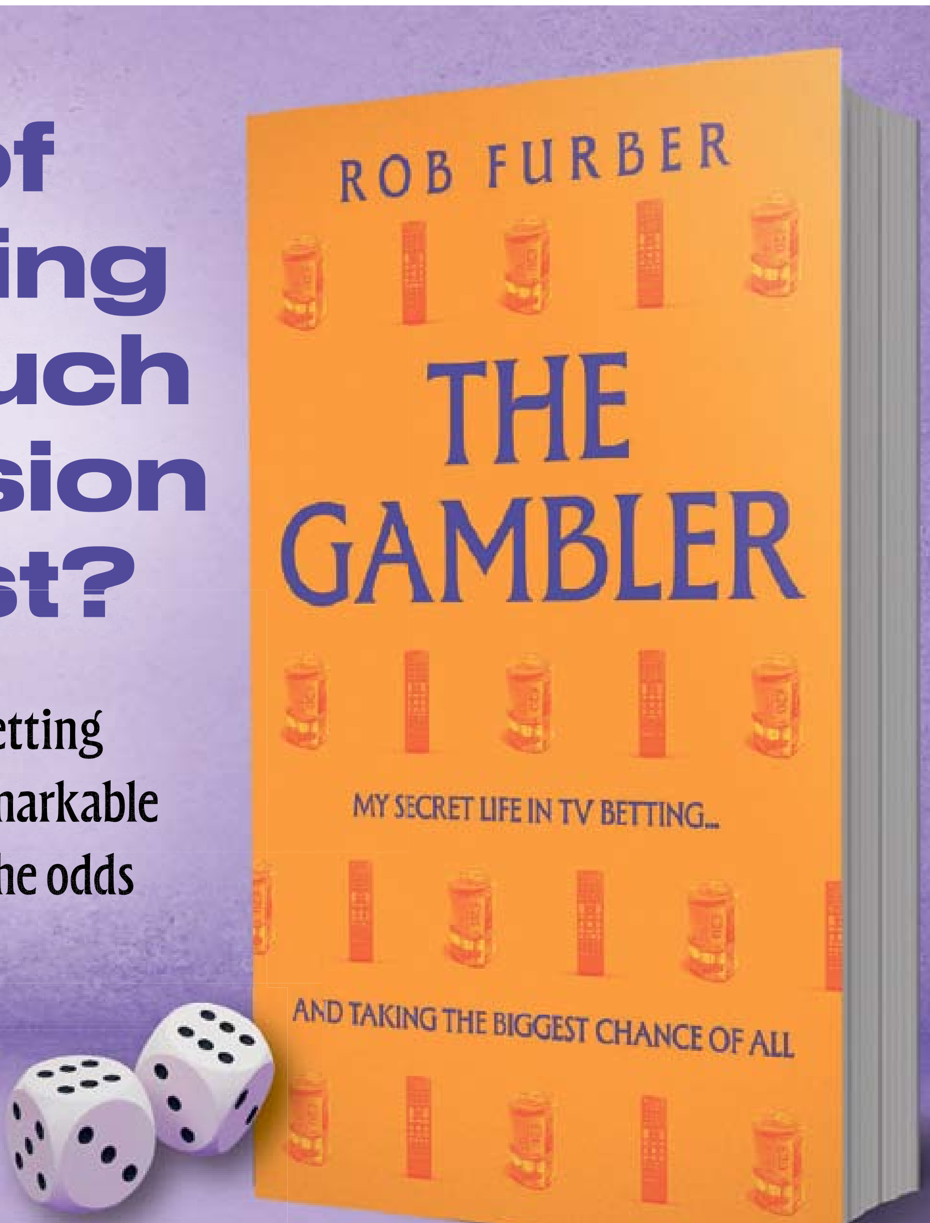
ROB FURBER
THE GAMBLER
MY SECRET LIFE IN TV BETTING...
AND TAKING THE BIGGEST CHANCE OF ALL

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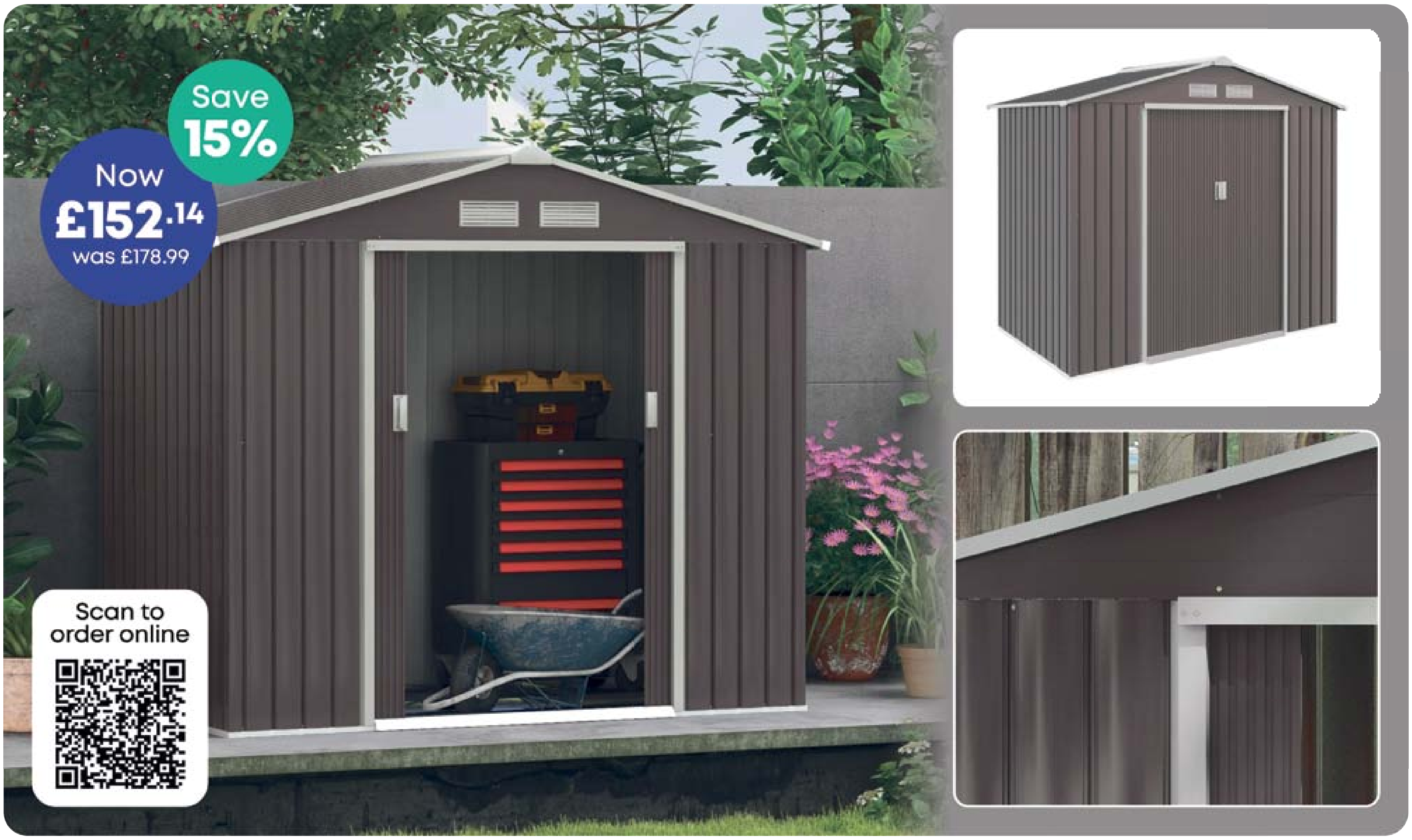
SECURE GARDEN STORAGE



Keep your garden tidy and protected through every season with this strong metal shed. Made from strong galvanised steel, it is designed to provide dependable storage for regular garden use. A protective weather coating helps shield the shed from outdoor conditions, while four vents support airflow to reduce moisture build-up inside. The lockable double sliding doors open smoothly at the front, allowing easy access without taking up additional space.

Supplied with a foundation kit, the shed is designed to stand level on the ground for added stability. With overall dimensions of 185 x 130 x 213cm and an interior measuring 185 x 117 x 203cm, it offers practical room for storing tools and outdoor items. This shed supports a tidy garden environment and keeps frequently used equipment protected and close at hand throughout the year with straightforward access.

Four vents are positioned to encourage air movement and help prevent moisture build-up inside the shed, while the sliding doors create a clear opening for moving tools in and out without obstruction during regular garden tasks and seasonal storage needs throughout use.

- ✓ Lockable double sliding doors
- ✓ 4 x built-in vents
- ✓ Made from: Galvanised steel with protective weather coating
- ✓ Dimensions: H185 x W130 x D213cm
- ✓ Self-assembly required

yimbly.com/Offer41 Quote **Offer41** Offer ends 1st February

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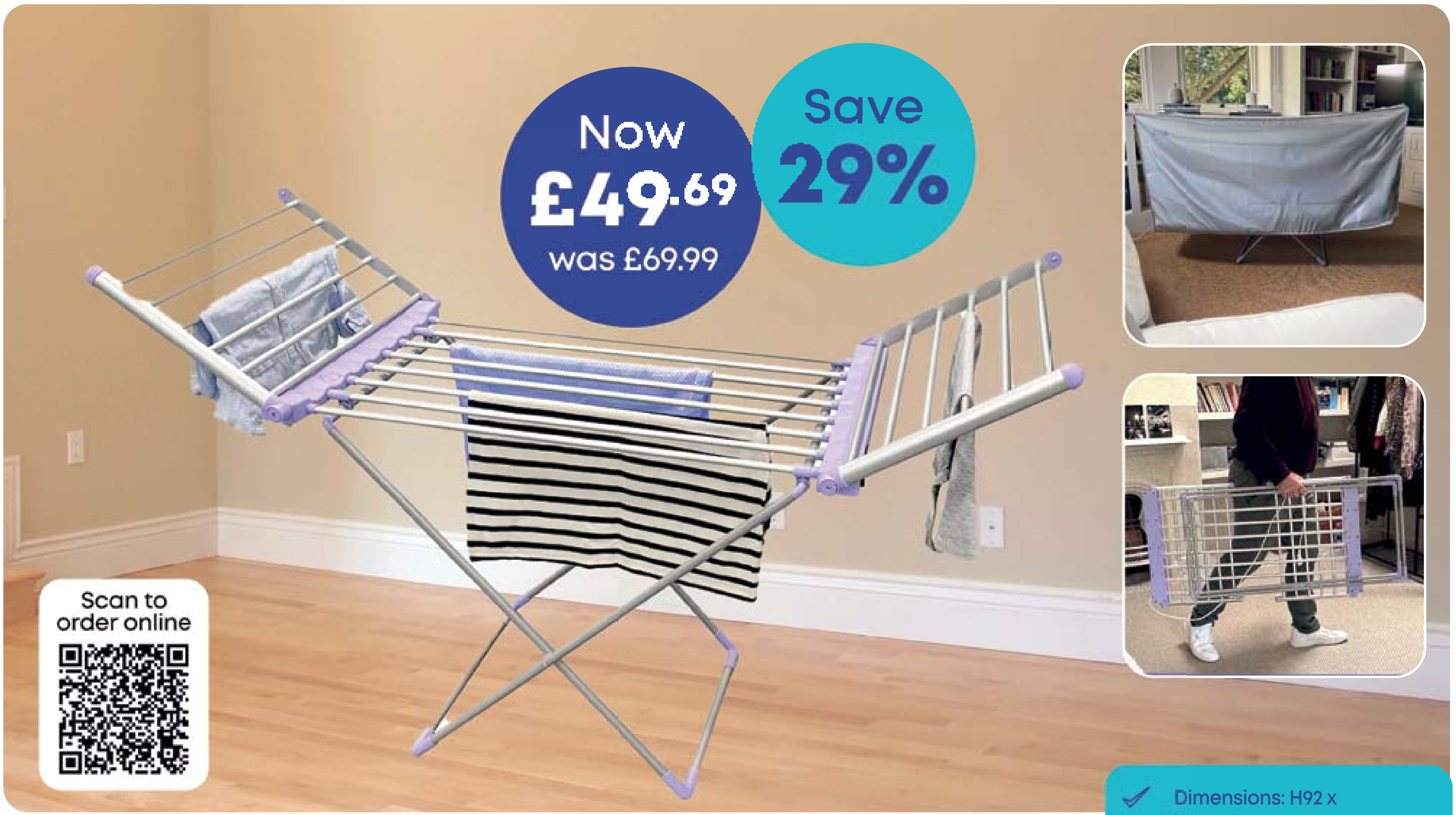
ENERGY-EFFICIENT WINGED HEATED AIRER



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Save 29%

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Dry larger, heavier items quickly and efficiently with the Speedi Dry Winged Heated Airer. Its wide wings provide 12m of drying space - ideal for towels, bedding, jumpers, and trousers that need room to hang flat. The open layout ensures even airflow and faster results without overcrowding.

FAST, GENTLE, AND EFFICIENT

Featuring 18 heated bars that warm up to 70°C in just minutes, the airer gently dries your clothes while reducing creases and protecting fabrics from shrinking. Costing just 6p per hour to run, it's a far more energy-efficient option than using a tumble dryer or central heating.

SMART CONTROLS FOR EFFORTLESS DRYING

With adjustable temperature settings from 30–70°C and a built-in timer (1–9 hours), you can tailor each drying cycle to your laundry needs. When the time is up, the unit automatically switches off for added safety and convenience.

THOUGHTFUL DESIGN AND EASY STORAGE

A bonus insulating cover helps trap warmth, speed up drying, and keep your laundry free from dust and pet hair. Lightweight and sturdy, the airer folds completely flat when not in use, making it easy to store under a bed or behind a door.

The Speedi Dry Winged Heated Airer is the ideal choice for families and anyone needing extra space to dry laundry quickly, gently, and efficiently - whatever the weather.

- ✓ Dimensions: H92 x W54 x L146 cm
- ✓ Mains operated
- ✓ Cable length: 1.7m
- ✓ Running cost: approximately 6p per hour
- ✓ 12 metres of drying space
- ✓ Holds up to 15kg of wet laundry
- ✓ Includes heat insulating cover
- ✓ Folds down flat for easy storage

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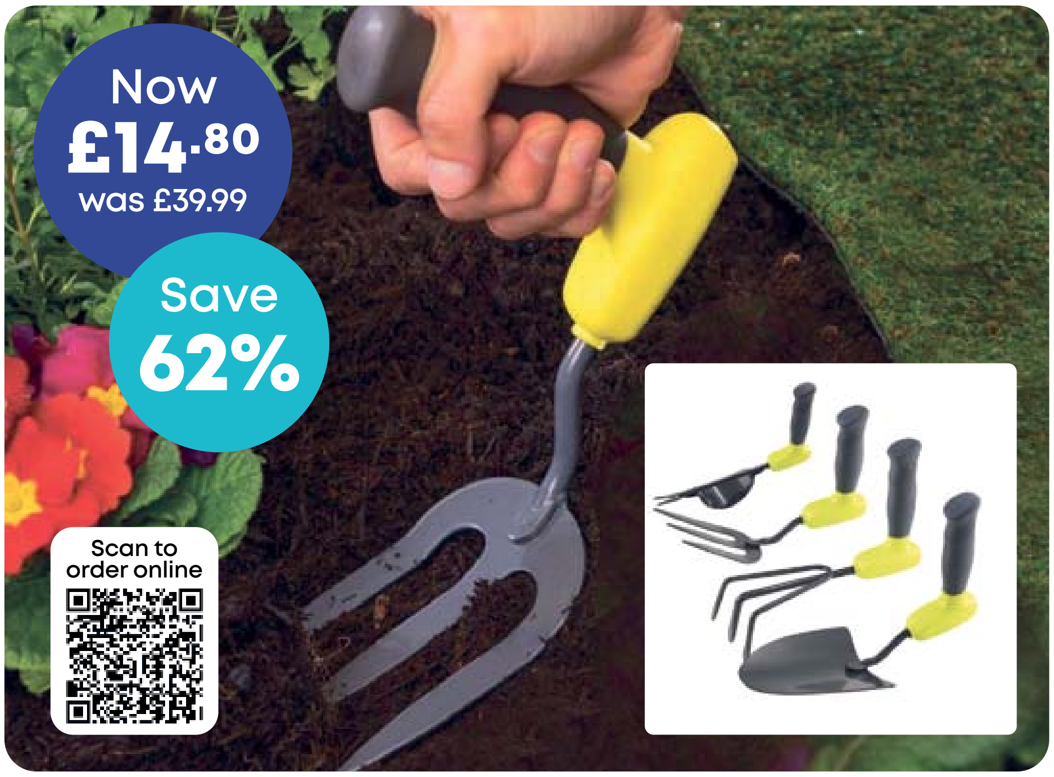

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62%

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Gardening doesn't have to be a chore with these Comfort Garden Tools. Four expertly designed tools feature 90-degree handles that promote perfect wrist alignment, allowing you to garden with less strain and more strength. Thanks to this innovative design, you can generate 25% more force with ease, so tasks feel lighter and faster. Perfect for gardeners of all ages and abilities, especially seniors or those with arthritis, these tools make gardening stress-free. Made from durable carbon steel, KLEVA tools are lightweight, sturdy, and long-lasting, with a comfortable grip for both left and right-handed users. The Tough-Trowel, Fast-Fork, Comfy-Cultivator, and Bonus Weeder each serve a unique purpose, from weeding to transplanting, breaking up soil, and more. Enjoy gardening without pain - KLEVA Comfort Garden Tools are here to help. The ideal gift for any gardener.

yimbly.com/Offer4 Quote **Offer4** Limited time offer

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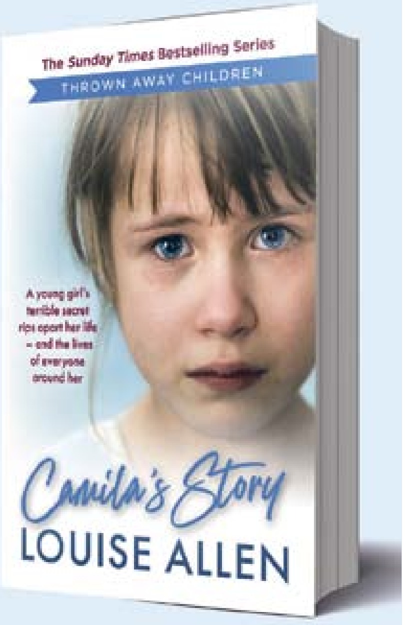
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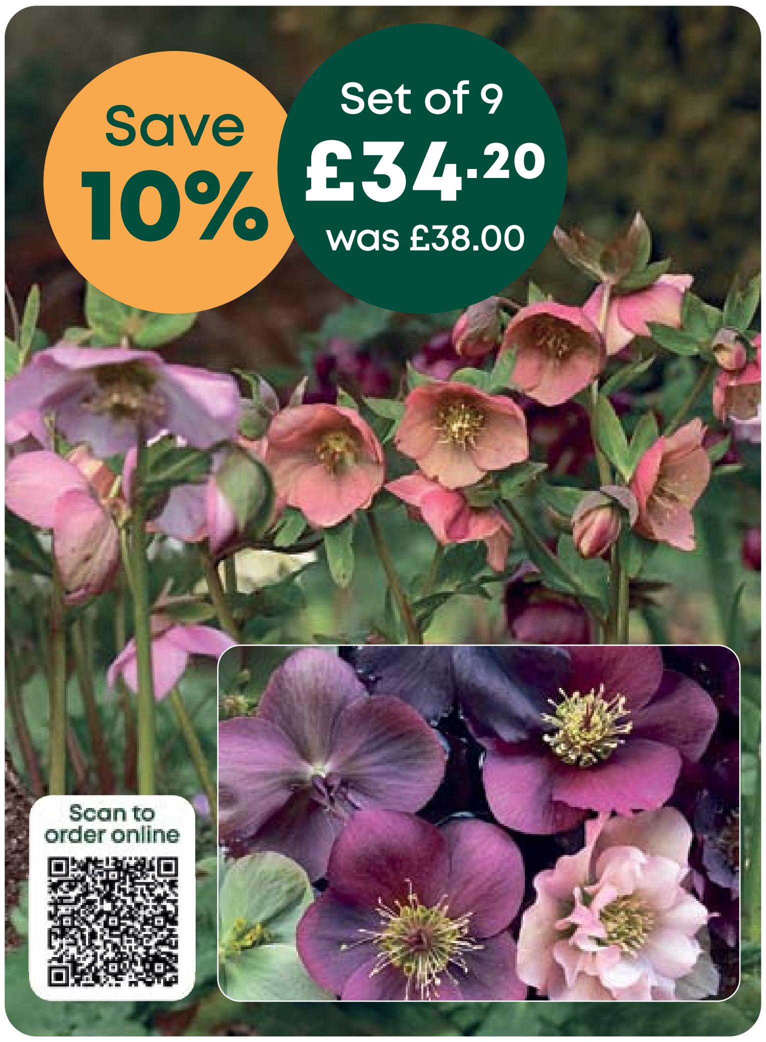
HELLEBORUS ORIENTALIS MIX



Save
10%

Set of 9
£34.20
was £38.00

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Helleborus Orientalis Mix brings winter colour to your garden. As the colder months stretch on, these hardy perennials awaken from late January and continue to bloom into May, offering saucer-shaped flowers in white, pink, green, purple, red or nearly black.

Glossy evergreen leaves frame each flower, adding richness and structure to borders, containers, slopes or under trees. Fully hardy to -20°C, they need no winter protection, resist deer and rabbits, and provide nectar for sleepy bees. Supplied in 3 x 9cm pots, they prefer moist, humus-rich soil in dappled shade and reach 30-50cm in height and spread.

Perfect for novice and experienced gardeners, they brighten winter with charm and resilience.

- ✓ Plant type: Perennial
- ✓ Flowering period: January - May
- ✓ Position: Part sun / part shade / full shade
- ✓ Height / Spread in maturity: 50cm/50cm
- ✓ Temperatures: Fully hardy down to -20°C
- ✓ Good for: Pots, containers, pollinators

yimbly.com/garden9 Quote **OfferGDN9** Offer ends 31st January

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Save 35%

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Jet Hawk offers a deep, power-washed clean without needing a power source or cumbersome equipment. This handheld, cordless pressure washer uses innovative water syphoning technology to draw from any water source - buckets, bowls, or canals. With a high-capacity battery providing 45 minutes of powerful washing, it's five times stronger than a standard hose. Perfect for cars, bikes, and patios, it features a fine mesh filter and is compatible with outdoor hoses. The included soap dispenser and 6-in-1 nozzle enhance its versatile cleaning capabilities.

yimbly.com/Offer128 Quote **Offer128** Limited time offer

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Winter.

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PRIMULA VULGARIS RASPBERRY

Due for dispatch from 6th March

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Save 15%

Set of 5 £23.80 was £28.00

While most plants sleep through winter, Primula vulgaris 'Raspberry Rose' provides vibrant colour and structure in the garden. Raspberry-pink flowers with sunny yellow centres rise above a neat evergreen rosette from late winter into spring, ideal for shaded borders, woodland gardens, or patio containers. Hardy to -10°C, it thrives in moist, well-drained soil with part sun or part shade and tolerates cooler sun. Plant in autumn or early spring to establish roots for long-lasting blooms. Supplied as one 1L pot, it is low-maintenance, resilient, and offers intermittent reblooming, making it perfect for UK gardeners seeking reliable early-season interest while supporting pollinators in a naturalistic planting.

- ✓ Plant type: Perennial
- ✓ Flowering period: January - March
- ✓ Position: Part sun / part shade
- ✓ Height / Spread in maturity: 20cm/20cm
- ✓ Temperatures: Hardy down to -15°C
- ✓ Good for: Borders, pots, containers, hanging baskets, pollinators, low-maintenance gardens, ground cover, informal planting, front of beds

yimbly.com/garden8 Quote **OfferGDN8** Offer ends 31st January

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by DAN KAY

With a foreword from
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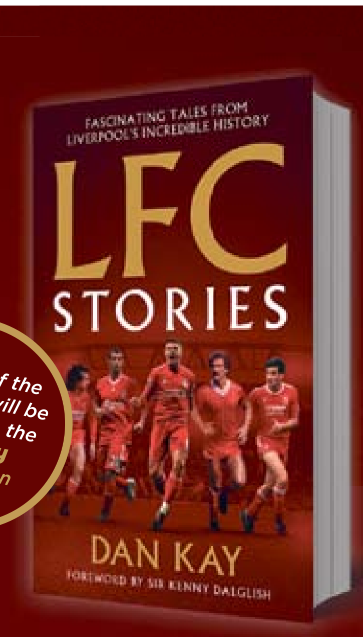
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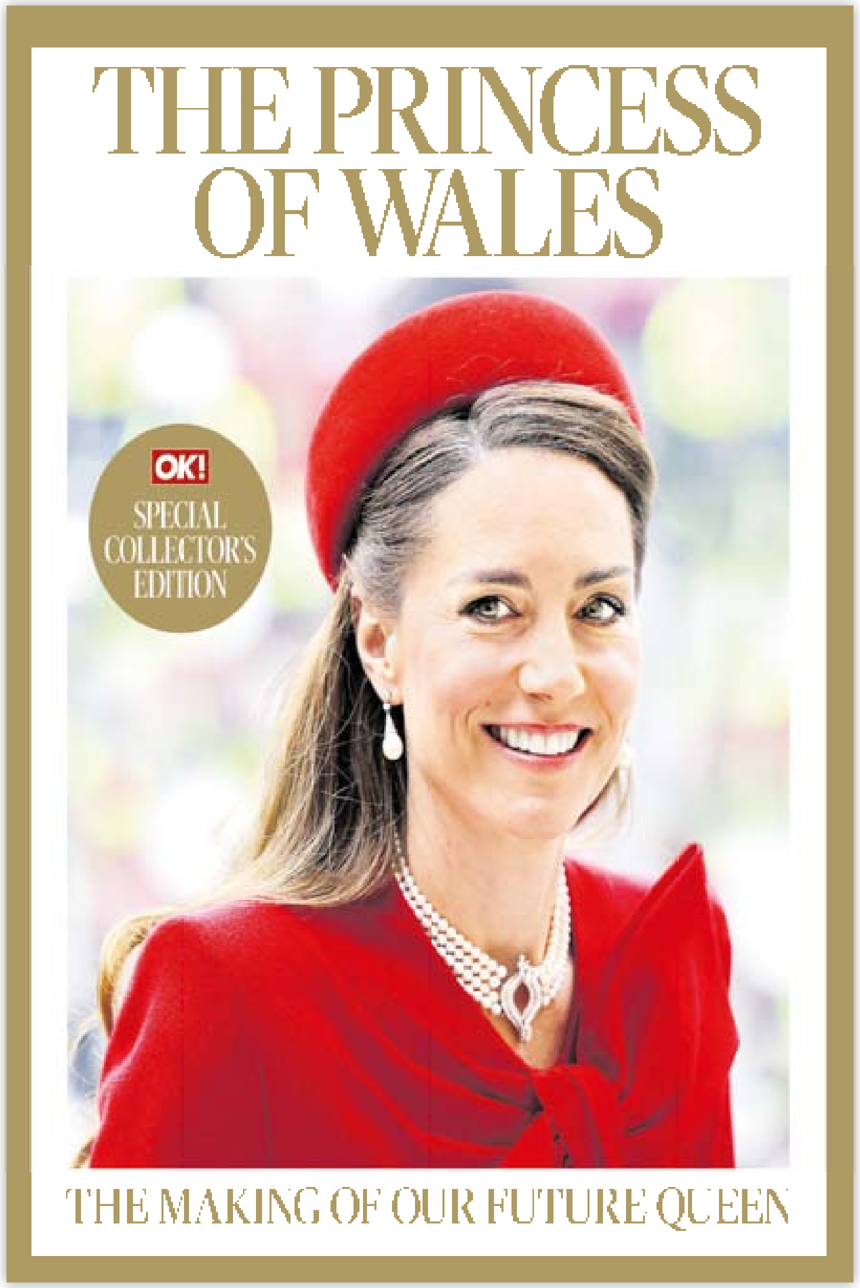

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STARTS INSIDE SUNDAY'S PAPER

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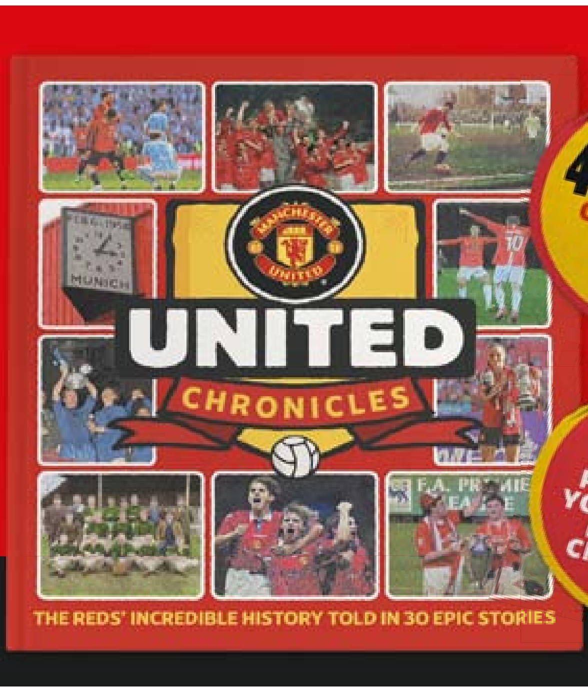
THE REDS' INCREDIBLE HISTORY TOLD IN 30 EPIC STORIES



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STRONG GUST

Honeyball stable target a third win in Veterans'

VET BILL Gustavian has conditions in his favour at Sandown

THE SCOUT
MELISSA JONES
Britain's top tipster

GUSTAVIAN (3.05) gets the vote in the £100,000 Unibet Veterans' Handicap Chase over three miles at Sandown Park.

Trained by Anthony Honeyball, who likes to target this race, the 11-year-old enjoys a sound surface and conditions are the quickest they have been since 2016.

Jepeck (2020) and Sam Brown (2024) took this for the stable when the mud was flying and my selection is expected to try and lead all the way.

That was the case in the 64th Badger Beers Handicap Chase at Wincanton 56 days ago, when he quickened clear in the closing stages to score by nine-and-a-half lengths.

Gustavian will have to pull out more to follow-up off an 8lb higher mark, but he was value for more than the official winning margin and this is his second outing after a wind operation.

The card also features the half-a-mile shorter Unibet Middle Distance Veterans' Handicap Chase with **Jet Plane** and **Numitor** heading the weights.

But both have to give 9lb to Joe Tizzard trainee **TRIPLE TRADE** (1.50), who returns to a right-handed track and remains well-treated on old form.

In fine fettle this season, the ten-year-old battled hard to land a handicap by a neck at Cheltenham's November Meeting and ran his usual honest race behind improver David's Well at the track subsequently. Against the older brigade here, Triple Trade should find his task a little easier and this should be run to suit with several prominent racers declared.

Now she has regained the winning thread, **NURSE SUSAN** (2.25) is fancied to gain some valuable black type in the Listed Unibet Mares' Hurdle.

On the back of an encouraging debut for Warren Greatrex, left, the former David Maxwell-owned **ALL IN YOU** (3.35) goes for the Read Nicky Henderson's Unibet Blog Handicap Hurdle.

TRANSMISSION (1.30) is declared to wear a first-time visor in Wincanton's Bet 10 Get 40 With BetMGM Handicap Chase.

The only real hold-up performer in a field of front runners, including ownermate **Kelce**, the headgear comes out as the nine-year-old drops back down to his last winning mark.

If getting into a good rhythm for Bradley Harris, who takes 3lb off his horse's allotted weight, Transmission has the stamina to see this out best.

Back at almost two miles in the Gamble Responsibly At BetMGM Handicap Hurdle, **THREE PIKES** (2.05) is running from a fair opening rating of 105 and has talented rider Rian Corcoran claiming 7lb.

Hard for the handicapper to get a handle on as he only just does enough to win, **GOT A DREAM** (2.40) is tipped for a hat-trick in the Play Golden Goals At BetMGM Handicap Hurdle.

WINCANTON RACINGTV

INSPECTION 8.00AM

THE SCOUT

12.27 Eldorado Allen	2.40 Got A Dream
12.57 Miss Macaroni	3.17 Staff Sergeant Len
1.30 Transmission	3.50 KILWAUGHTER
2.05 Three Pikes	

12.27 BETMGM HANDICAP CHASE (GBB RACE)
£18,210 (Class 2)2m 4f 35yds (3 declared)

1 4L05-13 ● **ELDORADO ALLEN (22) (D)** J Tizzard 12 12-1.....**J Tudor 145**
2 112/95-L **OUTLAW PETER (58) (D)** P Nicholls 10 11-6............**F Gingell 139**
3 5-P224U **GABRIEL'S GETAWAY (7)** A Honeyball 9 11-1**S Twiston-Davies ★147**

TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 2, 3 CHEEK PIECES: No. 1.
SP FORECAST: 5-4 Eldorado Allen, 15-8 Outlaw Peter, 5-2 Gabriel's Getaway.
2025: Meeting abandoned due to Frost.

12.57 MARES' NOVICES' HURDLE (GBB RACE)
£5,446 (4) 1m 7f 50yds (7)

1 41 **NO TRICKS AT ALL (73)** O Murphy 5 11-11..................**J Tudor 104**
2 6-L **DEAUVILLE LADY (29)** N Hawke 5 11-4...............**J M Davies 29**
3 8-756 **LYDEARD GIRL (23)** K Woollacott 5 11-4......**C Pritchard(3) 97**
4 0- ● **MISS MACARONI (344)** B Pauling 6 11-4............**K Woods –**
5 P21-157 **SHE'S DELIGHTED (38)** F O'Brien 6 11-4....................**J Hogan –**
6 3-8 **SILVER GALE (235)** Katy Price 5 11-4 .....**Shane Quinlan(3) –**
7 4-44 **YELD TO CALL (44)** Mrs J Williams 5 11-4...........**C Gethings ★112**

SP FORECAST: 11-8 No Tricks At All, 3 She's Delighted, 4 Yeld To Call, 13-2 Lydeard Girl, 10 Miss Macaroni, 33 Silver Gale, 50 Deauville Lady.

1.30 HANDICAP CHASE (GBB RACE) ITV1
£13,202 (3) 3m 1f 30yds (7)

1 2L5-0L8 ● **TRANSMISSION (14) (D)** 9 12 0 **B Harris(3) 131**
Runs: 22 Wins: 3(S,G) Places: 7 £88,365
Trainer: N Mulholland Owner: Paul McKeon

2 227LL6 **TOMMIE BEAU (35) (D)** 11 11 13 **C Pritchard(3) 122**
Runs: 50 Wins: 14(S,GS,G) Places: 9 £197,884
Trainer: Seamus Mullins Owner: Simon & Christine Prout

3 532P-51 **SILVER THORN (22) (F)** 7 11 6.....**Paul O'Brien 131**
Runs: 9 Wins: 2(S,GS) Places: 1 £14,656
Trainer: E Lavelle Owner: Syders & Burkes

4 2F21P-1 **WICKED THOUGHTS (37)** 7 11 6..........**F Gingell 129**
Runs: 10 Wins: 4(S,F,G) Places: 2 £26,400
Trainer: P Nicholls Owner: Mrs L Maclennan

5 1/2214-P **TOMMY THE TANK (29)** 8 11 5......**C Hammond –**
Runs: 6 Wins: 2(S,GS) Places: 2 £10,372
Trainer: Dr R Newland & J Insole
Owner: Mark Albon & Chris Stedman

6 F21-472 **KELCE (8)** 8 11 3..................................**C O'Farrell★135**
Runs: 17 Wins: 2(S,G) Places: 5 £26,599
Trainer: N Mulholland Owner: Paul McKeon

7 2P34-3P **VISION DE MAINE (16)** 7 10 6................**J Tudor 134**
Runs: 13 Wins: 3(GS,G) Places: 3 £16,013
Trainer: D Pipe Owner: Prof Caroline Tisdall

BLINKERS: No. 7 VISOR: No. 1 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 2, 4, 6.
SP FORECAST: 11-4 Wicked Thoughts, 4 Transmission, 9-2 Kelce, 5 Silver Thorn, Vision De Maine, 8 Tommy The Tank, 20 Tommie Beau.
GUIDE: WICKED THOUGHTS returned with a neck win at Taunton (2m7f, gd-fm) in November and, considering that was his debut over fences and his first start since April, plenty of improvement is expected. **Silver Thorn** also won last time out when seeing off Ladronne by 13 lengths at Doncaster (3m, gd-sft) and an added 6lb from the handicapper may not stop him mounting a serious challenge, with **Tommy The Tank** an interesting alternative. A winner over hurdles at Hereford (3m2f, gd-sft), he was pulled up over fences at Sandown (3m, gd-sft) but is sure to have been well schooled since.

TRACK FACTS: GOING: Good. Right Handed. **TOP TRACK JOCKEY (2021-26):** Sam Twiston-Davies 17% Strike rate. **TOP TRACK TRAINER (2021-26):** P Nicholls 27% Strike rate. **FIRST TIME:** 1.30 Tommie Beau (cheek pieces), Transmission (visor), Vision De Maine (blinkers), 2.05 Celine Man (wind surgery), Raffles Nobu (blinkers), 2.40 Geezer Rockstar (cheek pieces, tongue strap), Cruden (cheek pieces), 3.17 Staff Sergeant Len (visor), 3.50 Hydration Station (wind surgery), 12.57 Yeld To Call (wind surgery). **STABLE SWITCH:** 2.05 **Celine Man** from Miss H Knight to J R Jenkins. 2.40 **Cruden** from J Ewart to Dan Horsford. 3.50 **Fane Court** from Craig Kileff to B Lund, **Hydration Station** from S Doyle in Ireland to P Nicholls, **Seaniecon** from Jim O'neill to J & A O'Neill.

GOSSIP FROM THE GALLOPS

Newmarket: WESTCOMBE (2.20 Lingfield)
Midlands: JET PLANE (1.50 Sandown)
North: FOXTROT FLYER (7.30 Southwell)
West: HIM MALAYA (2.05 Wincanton)

2.05 HANDICAP HURDLE ITV1
£4,753 (4) 1m 7f 50yds (11)

1 2-62L50 **TEORIE (18)** 6 12 0...............................**R David(7) 115**
Runs: 13 Wins: 2(GS) Places: 3 £18,481
Trainer: Daisy Hitchins Owner: Miss Daisy Hitchins

2 P15-253 **PURPLE OWL (25)** 6 11 13......................**J Tudor 105**
Runs: 7 Wins: 1 Places: 2 £2,898
Trainer: D Pipe Owner: Claire Harrison & Jane Gerard-pearse

3 18-P355 **KNIGHT TEMPLAR (7)** 5 11 12.....**Sean Houlihan 111**
Runs: 7 Wins: 1(GS) £19,418
Trainer: R Stephens Owner: Mrs V James

4 47-5F **SEA WARRIOR (18)** 7 11 12....................**F Gingell 105**
Runs: 4 £669
Trainer: J Tizzard Owner: The Sea Warrior Syndicate

5 34-3934 **HIM MALAYA (23) (C&D,S)** 7 11 11
Miss Olive Nicholls(5) 111
Runs: 20 Wins: 2(S,G) Places: 6 £27,579
Trainer: P Nicholls Owner: Mr & Mrs Mark Woodhouse

6 52-1223 ● **THREE PIKES (109)** 6 11 10...**R Corcoran(7) 106**
Runs: 6 Wins: 1(GS) Places: 4 £9,083
Trainer: Henry Oliver Owner: Mr Nick Shutts

7 5P5-464 **RAFFLES NOBU (24)** 6 11 4.............**B Macey(7) 105**
Runs: 13 Wins: 1(S) Places: 2 £36,575
Trainer: Nick Scholfield Owner: Mr Michael Ogburn

8 7/P2-412 **WESTERN SOLDIER (30) (C&D,F)** 8 11 1
C Pritchard(3) 111
Runs: 10 Wins: 2(GS,G) Places: 2 £15,514
Trainer: Seamus Mullins Owner: Mrs Kate Kenyon

9 2431 **PREMIER (23)** 4 11 0..............**S Twiston-Davies ★116**
Runs: 4 Wins: 1(G) Places: 2 £9,418
Trainer: W Greatrex Owner: Jim and Claire Limited

10 P-09 **VICTORY SHOUT (17)** 5 10 12.............**H Kimber 97**
Runs: 3
Trainer: S Hosie Owner: Kenyon & Van Der Horst

11 9002PP/ **CELINE MAN (619) 8 10 2**.................**R T Dunne –**
Runs: 7 Places: 1 £1,944
Trainer: J R Jenkins Owner: Mr James O Regan

BLINKERS: No. 7 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 5 HOOD: No. 9.
SP FORECAST: 9-2 Premier, 5 Three Pikes, 6 Him Malaya, 13-2 Purple Owl, 7 Western Soldier, 8 Knight Templar, 10 Raffles Nobu, Victory Shout, Sea Warrior, 16 Others.
GUIDE: Sea Warrior is an interesting option for the places after clipping heels and falling when travelling well enough here (1m7f, sft) last month, and there is every chance he is better than his current mark. **Three Pikes** brings consistency to the table and, following a third at Uttoxeter (2m4f, gd) when weakening late on, he ought to be far better suited to this trip, a remark that also applies to **WESTERN SOLDIER.** A winner over C&D (gd) in November, he pulled too hard here (2m4f, gd-sft) latest but should be a different proposition now.

2.40 HANDICAP HURDLE ITV1
£6,337 (4) 2m 5f 82yds (8)

1 7/46L-11 ● **GOT A DREAM (60) (D)** 7 11 9**Sean Houlihan 118**
Runs: 8 Wins: 3(S,G) £14,031
Trainer: Nicky Martin Owner: Bradley Partnership

2 12522- **CRUDEN (F26)** 5 11 9...........................**C Deutsch 112**
Runs: 5 Wins: 1(G) Places: 3 £12,136
Trainer: Dan Horsford Owner: Rhm Horses Ltd

3 0/5PP2-L **GEEZER ROCKSTAR (47)** 7 11 8...........**B Carver 118**
Runs: 10 Wins: 2(GS,G) Places: 1 £11,413
Trainer: H Fry Owner: Doubtfire, Haring, Thornton & Davies

4 1L2-2F1 **MALDINI MILANO (61) (D)** 6 11 8........**F Gingell 114**
Runs: 6 Wins: 2(G) Places: 2 £10,354
Trainer: P Nicholls Owner: Kate & Andrew Brooks

5 06-29P8 **MOUTARDE (22)** 5 11 7...............**C Pritchard(3) 121**
Runs: 13 Wins: 2(GS) Places: 2 £19,321
Trainer: S Hosie Owner: Mrs Kate Kenyon

6 13-21P0 **THE EXPENSIVE ONE (50)** 6 11 4....**S Twiston-Davies 120**
Runs: 7 Wins: 2(S,G) Places: 2 £10,635
Trainer: N & W Twiston-Davies Owner: Mr N A Twiston-Davies

7 31-4443 **CALL ME LEGEND (23)** 6 11 2
Mr Jack Stenhouse(7) ★122
Runs: 8 Wins: 1(G) Places: 1 £6,038
Trainer: P Hobbs & J White Owner: House Family Partnership

8 3/6573-L **GEORGE HENRY (13)** 7 11 2..**Miss Olive Nicholls(5) 116**
Runs: 7 Places: 1 £2,143
Trainer: P Nicholls Owner: Mr&Mrs Mark Woodhouse & Mr Paul Nichol

VISOR: No. 5 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 3, 8
CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 2, 3, 4.
SP FORECAST: 11-4 Got A Dream, 7-2 Maldini Milano, Call Me Legend, 4 Cruden, 12 Geezer Rockstar, The Expensive One, 14 George Henry, 25 Moutarde.
GUIDE: Got A Dream bids for a hat-trick raised a further 5lb after scoring at Warwick (2m5f, gd) and may not have finished winning yet. **Call Me Legend** faced a tougher test when third at Taunton (2m3f, gd) and he has to be of interest, but **MALDINI MILANO** makes most appeal. He landed a maiden hurdle at Plumpton (2m5f, gd) in good style in November and, with the form working out well, Paul Nicholls' charge could prove better than his opening mark. Of the rest, **Cruden** is fit from the all-weather and reverts to hurdling with a shout.

3.17 NOVICES' HANDICAP CHASE
£3,829 (5) 3m 1f 30yds (5)

1 426-63U ● **STAFF SERGEANT LEN (8)** S Hosie 6 12-0..**P Hanlon(5) –**
2 L7-89P1 **AMAZING CLENI (24)** K Bailey & M Nicholls 6 11-2**T Bellamy 100**
3 355/2-PP **DEFI NONANTAIS (16)** J Tizzard 7 11-2......................**J Tudor –**
4 74/333P **SWEET NIGHTINGALE (24)** P Gundry 9 10-11....**C Pritchard(3) ★107**
5 PU1-4P3 **TUSCAN ROSE (18)** N Mulholland 8 10-11...........**B Harris(3) 99**

VISOR: No. 1 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 4 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 2, 3, 5.
SP FORECAST: 11-8 Amazing Cleni, 5-2 Staff Sergeant Len, 4 Tuscan Rose, 13-2 Defi Nonantais, 14 Sweet Nightingale.

3.50 MAIDEN HURDLE (GBB RACE) £5,446
(4) 2m 5f 82yds (12)

1 PP-2U2P **ABERFELDY (58)** S Hosie 6 11-6.............................**H Kimber –**
2 3-4 **A KING OF MAGIC (67)** P Nicholls 5 11-6.............**L Harrison –**
3 3/70-P5 **BADENTAGGART (18)** J Scott 7 11-6.......................**L Williams 91**
4 32LL **CHARLIES JETAWAY (15)** S Hosie 5 11-6..........**P Hanlon(5) 74**
5 6P **CREST OF VALOUR (33)** A Honeyball 5 11-6 ...**C Bament(7) –**
6 B/1 **FANE COURT (42)** B Lund 8 11-6..............**Shane Quinlan(3) –**
7 41- **HYDRATION STATION (300)** P Nicholls 6 11-6.......**F Gingell –**
8 16-3L4 ● **KILWAUGHTER (29)** P Hobbs & J White 6 11-6...**Sean Houlihan ★111**
9 85-7 **POP'S FOLLY (30)** G Nicholls 6 11-6................**F Lambert(3) 88**
10 37 **SAILING BY (29)** J Tizzard 5 11-6 ....**J Tudor –**
11 21 **SEANIECON (224)** J & A O'Neill 5 11-6.................**B Macey(7) –**
12 112-29 **SINCHI ROCA (15)** S Hosie 6 11-6.............................**C Deutsch –**

BLINKERS: No. 3.
SP FORECAST: 9-4 Sinchi Roca, 11-4 Hydration Station, 5 Seaniecon, Kilwaughter, 13-2 A King Of Magic, 12 Sailing By, 25 Crest Of Valour, Fane Court, 50 Others.
BEATEN FAVOURITES: 12.27 Eldorado Allen(hcp ch), Outlaw Peter(hcp ch). 2.05 Three Pikes, Western Soldier(hcp hdl). 3.50 A King Of Magic, Sailing By. **LONGEST TRAVELLER: Celine Man** (2.05) 146 miles.

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Ian Balding dies at 87

MILL REEF TRAINER LEAVES HUGE LEGACY

By **David Yates**

IAN BALDING, trainer of the legendary Mill Reef – and father of Classic winner Andrew and TV presenter Clare – has passed away at the age of 87.

Balding, also a Cheltenham Festival-winning rider, shaped the careers of many top-class horses after taking the reins at Park House Stables in Kingsclere upon the death of Peter Hastings-Bass in 1964.

But his name will forever be remembered through the exploits of Mill Reef, who carried the colours of his owner Paul Mellon to victory in the Derby, Eclipse Stakes, King George VI And Queen Elizabeth Stakes and Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe to help Balding clinch the 1971 champion trainer crown.

Balding, left, retired in 2002 and passed the licence on to son Andrew, who achieved Classic success with Casual Look (2003) in the Oaks and Kameko (2020) and Chaldean (2023) in the 2,000 Guineas.

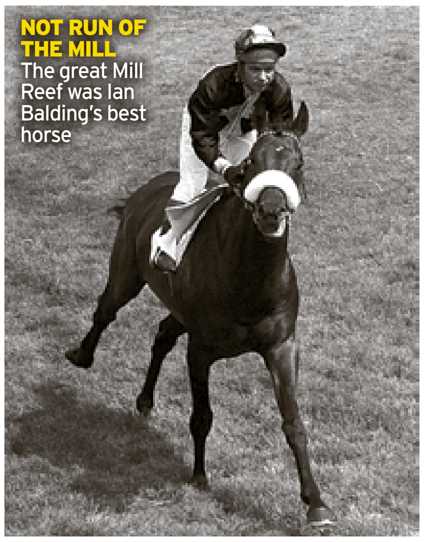
A statement for the Berkshire stable announced yesterday: "We are deeply sorry to share the sad news that Ian Balding has passed away. A wonderful family man, a hugely successful racehorse trainer and a brilliant sportsman.

"He will be greatly missed by all at Park House."

Paying tribute to Balding, Derby-winning jockey Martin Dwyer, who began his career at Kingsclere, said: "I owe Ian and his family a great debt of gratitude.

"He took me in as a snotty-nosed kid from Liverpool. I was a bit rough around the edges when I first came in, but he taught me a lot about riding, racing and life in general.

"He leaves a great legacy."



NOT RUN OF THE MILL The great Mill Reef was Ian Balding's best horse

BIG FREEZE THREAT TO RACING

By **David Yates**

THE big freeze is placing National Hunt action at Sandown Park, Wincanton and Cork in jeopardy – with Newcastle already lost to the elements.

The £100,000 Unibet Veterans Chase Final fixture at Sandown hinges on an inspection at 8am, while turf cards at Wincanton and Cork are subject to checks at the same time.

"We are raceable as we stand at the moment but we have got a fair way to go and we're calling it precautionary at this stage, but it is still an inspection at the end of the day," said the Esher venue's clerk of the course Andrew Cooper, left.

"It could get down to -3C, which is getting to the top end of frost-cover protection.

"Without covers I don't think we would have a chance of surviving tonight's frost, but the frost covers give us a fighting chance."

Newcastle fell to an inspection yesterday morning while tomorrow's programme at Plumpton could be decided at 1pm today.

SANDOWN RACINGTV

Premier Raceday

THE SCOUT

12.15 Sinnatra
12.45 KEEP RUNNING (nb)
1.15 Lucky One
1.50 Triple Trade
2.25 Nurse Susan
3.05 Gustavian
3.35 All In You

JACKPOT: www.totepoolliveinfo.com. INSPECTION: 8.00AM

12.15 MAIDEN HURDLE (GBB RACE)
£7,804 (Class 3)1m 7f 216yds (7 declared)

1	4	**CONTACTO (17)** L Wadham 5 11-8	**T Cannon**	**108**
2		**FOURONEOHFEVER (F71)** B Pauling 5 11-8	**B R Jones**	**–**
3	**0**-7	**GOLLY GOSH (27)** Billy Aprahamian 5 11-8	**K Brogan**	**79**
4	**86**-U5	**NIGHT RIDE HOME (35)** N Henderson 5 11-8	**J Bowen**	**110**
5	**14**-22	● **SINNATRA (36)** D Skelton 6 11-8	**H Skelton**	**133**
6	29	**NELSON GATE (17)** G & J Moore 4 10-9	**C Quinn**	**111**
7	22	**POURQUOI PAS PAPA (29)** P Nicholls 4 10-9	**H Cobden**	**★134**

SP FORECAST: 10-11 Sinnatra, 5-2 Pourquoi Pas Papa, 5 Fouroneohfever, 14 Night Ride Home, Contacto, 25 Nelson Gate, 150 Golly Gosh.

2025: Meeting abandoned due to Frost.

12.45 HANDICAP CHASE (GBB RACE)
£15,609 (3) 1m 7f 99yds (5)

1	112-P21	● **KEEP RUNNING (29) (C&D,F)** W Greatrex 8 12-0	**J Bowen**	**144**
2	11P-321	**VANDERPOEL (15)** B Pauling 7 11-8	**B R Jones**	**146**
3	5-P224U	**GABRIEL'S GETAWAY (7)** A Honeyball 9 11-6	**R Dingle**	**144**
4	6L2-555	**KOTMASK (17) (C&D)** G & J Moore 8 11-3	**C Quinn**	**★147**
5	1112-L1	**SIAM PARK (47)** J Tizzard 7 10-4	**B J Powell**	**144**

BLINKERS: No. 4 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 3, 5.

SP FORECAST: 2 Vanderpoel, 9-4 Keep Running, 3 Siam Park, 13-2 Gabriel's Getaway, 10 Kotmask.

1.15 SENIORS' HANDICAP HURDLE
£10,406 (3) 2m 3f 178yds (11)

1	11233/	**NORTH LODGE (763) (D)** A King 9 12-1	**Doubtful**	**–**
2	19/P64-L	**STOLEN SILVER (22)** L Horsfall 11 11-11	**K Brogan**	**116**
3	410P0/L	**SONIGINO (35) (D)** P Nicholls 9 11-11	**F Keighley(7)**	**85**
4	L/4120-3	**HENRI THE SECOND (36) (C&D)** P Nicholls 9 11-9	**H Cobden**	**★140**
5	4-44251	**LUTTRELL LAD (41)** T Lacey 10 11-7	**A Stevens(3)**	**132**
6	45-3332	**BOURBALI (33) (C&D)** J Tizzard 9 11-6	**B J Powell**	**136**
7	U2158L	**SECRET TRIX (14)** O Murphy 9 11-2	**Aidan Weaver(7)**	**138**
8	F4L2-F4	**RANGE (41)** S Thomas 9 11-2	**D Johnston**	**136**
9	13/21B-7	**DOMINIC'S FAULT (35)** O Murphy 9 10-11	**S Bowen**	**119**
10	F7/456-1	**PONCHO (F31)** G & J Moore 8 10-3	**C Quinn**	**133**
11	470367	● **LUCKY ONE (15)** Mrs S Leech 11 10-2	**Miss Roisin Leech(7)**	**135**

VISOR: No. 5 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 3, 5, 7, 9
CHEEK PIECES: No. 10 HOOD: No. 2.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 6, 9, 4, 11, 5, 1, 8, 7, 3, 2.

SP FORECAST: 3 Luttrell Lad, 10-3 Poncho, 11-2 Dominic's Fault, 7 Henri The Second, Bourbali, 10 Range, Lucky One, 16 Secret Trix, Sonigino, 33 Others.

1.50 MIDDLE DISTANCE VETERANS' HCAP CHS ITV1
£13,008 (3) 2m 4f 15yds (6)

1 32-5571 **JET PLANE (24) (C&D,S)** 10 12 0 **H Skelton 137**
Runs: 35 Wins: 8(S,GS,G) Places: 5 £83,127
Trainer: D Skelton Owner: Norman Lake & Susan Carsberg

2 1P1P-PP **NUMITOR (50) (D)** 12 12 0 **J Bowen 138**
Runs: 31 Wins: 8(S,GS,G) Places: 5 £178,265
Trainer: H MainOwner: Mr Paul G Jacobs And Wetumpka Racing

3 L1-P12L **HURRICANE BAY (21)** 10 11 6 **T Cannon 139**
Runs: 19 Wins: 4(G) Places: 6 £46,011
Trainer: L Wadham Owner: The Hanseatic League

4 4724-13 ● **TRIPLE TRADE (21) (D)** 10 11 5 **B J Powell 137**
Runs: 30 Wins: 6(S,GS,G) Places: 7 £158,021
Trainer: J Tizzard Owner: Sjs Racing

5 522-L31 **CAN YOU CALL (22)** 11 11 5 **B R Jones★140**
Runs: 25 Wins: 4(S,GS) Places: 9 £76,804
Trainer: E Williams Owner: Mr & Mrs William Rucker

6 095L/41- **MINELLA TRUMP (300) (C&D)** 12 11 2 **T Gillard 135**
Runs: 29 Wins: 13(S,GS,G) Places: 2 £102,596
Trainer: D McCain Owner: Mr T G Leslie

TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 3, 5 CHEEK PIECES: No. 3.

SP FORECAST: 15-8 Jet Plane, 5-2 Can You Call, 7-2 Triple Trade, 7 Minella Trump, 12 Numitor, Hurricane Bay.

GUIDE: It was hard not to be impressed with the way in which **CAN YOU CALL** won at Cheltenham (2m4f, gd-sft) last month and, should Evan Williams' veteran arrive in a similar mood, a 7lb rise could prove lenient. **Jet Plane** was similarly emphatic at Leicester (2m4f, gd) and is entitled to plenty of respect, as is **Triple Trade**, who dips his toe into the veteran ranks for the first time. **Minella Trump** hasn't been seen since March's Carlisle (2m5f, gd) triumph and a market check is advised.

2.25 MARES' HDL (FILLIES' & MARES' LISTED) ITV1
£22,780 (1) 2m 3f 178yds (6)

1 1181-25 **JUBILEE ALPHA (21) (D)** 7 11 6 **H Cobden★147**
Runs: 9 Wins: 4(S,GS,G) Places: 3 £89,514
Trainer: P Nicholls Owner: The Pendil Partnership

2 86/1L5-P **GOOD LOOK CHARM (42) (C&D)** 10 11 4 **R Dingle 103**
Runs: 24 Wins: 5(S,GS) Places: 4 £77,371
Trainer: A Honeyball Owner: The Isle of Blue and White

3 11/09-91 ● **NURSE SUSAN (21) (D)** 9 11 4 **H Skelton 141**
Runs: 11 Wins: 5(S,GS) Places: 1 £91,776
Trainer: D Skelton Owner: Mr Colm Donlon

4 24-1P52 **SHANTWOPOINTFIVE (28) (D)** 8 11 4 **J Bowen 135**
Runs: 13 Wins: 4(S,GS) Places: 5 £30,842
Trainer: W Greatrex Owner: Both Ways Partnership

5 161F-31 **SUNSET MARQUESA (28) (C&D)** 7 11 4 **B J Powell 136**
Runs: 11 Wins: 4(S,GS) Places: 3 £34,511
Trainer: J Tizzard Owner: The Wychwood Partnership

6 71222-4 **THAT'LL DO MOSS (40)** 7 11 4 **J J Burke 144**
Runs: 9 Wins: 3(S,GS) Places: 3 £42,841
Trainer: F O'Brien Owner: Deva Racing TDM

VISOR: No. 2 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 5.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 2, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6.

SP FORECAST: 6-5 Jubilee Alpha, 5-2 Nurse Susan, 5 That'll Do Moss, 6 Sunset Marquesa, 20 Shantwopointfive, 33 Good Look Charm.

GUIDE: THAT'LL DO MOSS was probably in need of the run when she ran out of steam in a similar event at Kempton (2m5f, gd) in November. Better judged on her previous start, that saw her defy a huge price to fill the runner-up slot in the Grade 1 Honeysuckle Hurdle at Fairyhouse (2m4f, sft- hvy), better can be expected with her match-fitness topped up. **Nurse Susan** comfortably held **Jubilee Alpha** (fifth) when she won at Cheltenham (2m4f, gd-sft) last month but the latter has an 8lb pull and may reverse the form on the revised terms.

3.05 UNIBET VETERANS' HCAP CHASE ITV1
£51,440 (2) 3m 42yds (9)

1 74-1LP6 **LE MILOS (22) (C&D)** 11 12 0 **H Skelton 143**
Runs: 39 Wins: 9(S,GS,G) Places: 2 £302,577
Trainer: D Skelton Owner: The Jolly Good Partnership

2 P2F27-1 ● **GUSTAVIAN (56) (D)** 11 11 9 **R Dingle 138**
Runs: 34 Wins: 5(S,G) Places: 11 £161,808
Trainer: A Honeyball Owner: Decimus Racing I

3 1224-F1 **NOCTE VOLATUS (44) (D)** 11 11 9 **S Sheppard 141**
Runs: 33 Wins: 6(S,GS,G) Places: 8 £97,301
Trainer: T Lacey Owner: Lady Cobham And Dauntsey Park

4 12214-7 **COPPERHEAD (22) (D)** 12 11 7 **B J Powell 142**
Runs: 40 Wins: 9(S,GS,G) Places: 6 £182,173
Trainer: J Tizzard Owner: Mrs G C Pritchard

5 45F/PPP- **BLACKJACK MAGIC (328) (D)** 11 11 6 **B Godfrey –**
Runs: 20 Wins: 5(S,GS) Places: 2 £82,386
Trainer: A Honeyball Owner: Mr A Honeyball

6 L3-4LL1 **ANNSAM (31) (D)** 11 11 6 **Jonjo O'Neill Jr 140**
Runs: 34 Wins: 9(S,F,GS) Places: 5 £132,271
Trainer: E Williams Owner: Mr W Clifford

7 141L-34 **CREDO (42) (D)** 11 11 5 **H Cobden 140**
Runs: 32 Wins: 9(S,GS,G) Places: 7 £153,908
Trainer: A Honeyball Owner: Potwell Racing Syndicate II

8 2L/82-0L **GABBYS CROSS (44)** 11 11 3 **J Bowen 70**
Runs: 29 Wins: 5(S) Places: 4 £109,761
Trainer: Nick Scholfield Owner: Mr J P McGrath

9 U3L06L **DIGBY (31) (D)** 11 11 0 **P M O'Brien(5) ★144**
Runs: 33 Wins: 5(S,G) Places: 6 £85,432
Trainer: D A McLoughlin (IRE) Owner: Mr Alan E Smith

VISOR: No. 7
TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9
CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 4, 9.

SP FORECAST: 3 Le Milos, 7-2 Gustavian, 6 Credo, 7 Annsam, Nocte Volatus, 8 Copperhead, 10 Gabbys Cross, 14 Digby, 20 Blackjack Magic.

GUIDE: Only one outright favourite has won this in recent times, which underlines what a competitive annual event this usually turns out to be. **Gustavian** could well buck the trend if he matches the dominant effort he posted at Wincanton (3m1f, gd) most recently, while **Le Milos** is proven at this venue and will be a tough nut to crack if anywhere near his best. However, there is also plenty to like about **NOCTE VOLATUS,** who is unexposed over the trip and appeals for a bit of value after posting a ready success in a series qualifier at Warwick (3m, gd-sft) last time.

3.35 HANDICAP HURDLE ITV1
£15,609 (3) 1m 7f 216yds (8)

1 L18-11P **NARDARAN (47) (C&D)** 5 12 0 **H Cobden 129**
Runs: 7 Wins: 3(F,GS) £26,990
Trainer: P Nicholls Owner: Martin Broughton & Friends 2

2 2144-62 **HOT FUSS (14) (C&D)** 5 11 11 **D Bass★132**
Runs: 6 Wins: 1(S) Places: 3 £53,459
Trainer: T DascombeOwner: Keith, David & Stephen Trowbridge

3 11L-P22 **CONTINUANCE (22) (D)** 5 11 9 **F Keighley(7) 131**
Runs: 9 Wins: 3(GS,G) Places: 1 £25,348
Trainer: M Keighley Owner: Martin Keighley Racing Partnership 21

4 1551P1- **IMAGINARIUM (254) (D)** 7 11 8 **S Bowen 127**
Runs: 6 Wins: 3(GS) £18,654
Trainer: O Murphy Owner: John Nicholls Racing

5 41/FL5-2 ● **ALL IN YOU (15) (F)** 6 11 8 **J Bowen 129**
Runs: 7 Wins: 2(S) Places: 1 £31,882
Trainer: W Greatrex Owner: The Special Relationship

6 12-5241 **DANCE AND GLANCE (15) (D)** 6 11 6 **R Dingle 129**
Runs: 11 Wins: 4(S,G) Places: 3 £34,753
Trainer: A Honeyball Owner: Mere Racing

7 42-35 **BRACE FOR LANDING (35)** 5 11 5 **H Skelton 114**
Runs: 4 Places: 2 £14,439
Trainer: D Skelton
Owner: Robert Kirkland And Neil & Alfie Smith

8 3/61-715 **HE'S A LATCHICO (15) (D)** 8 11 0 **T P Queally 130**
Runs: 15 Wins: 4(S,G) Places: 2 £24,273
Trainer: G & J Moore
Owner: Mr Danny O'neill And Mr Gary Moore

VISOR: No. 2
TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 1, 6
CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 1, 7
HOOD: Nos. 3, 5.
SOFT/HEAVY WINNERS: Nos. 5, 6, 8, 2.

SP FORECAST: 3 Dance And Glance, 9-2 Hot Fuss, All In You, 7 Brace For Landing, 8 Nardaran, Imaginarium, Continuance, 10 He's A Latchico.

GUIDE: Dance And Glance held off a strong challenge from **All In You** when just prevailing at Ascot (2m, sft) last month. That pair are hard to separate, while **Continuance** went close at Cheltenham (2m1f, gd-sft) recently, having been beaten by **Nardaran** over C&D (gd-sft) prior to that. However, **HOT FUSS** could prove the one to side with on the evidence of his creditable second in a tougher contest at Ascot (2m, gd-sft) a fortnight ago. Unexposed over hurdles, there looks more to come from Tom Dascombe's charge off his current mark.

TRACK FACTS: GOING: Good to Soft. Right Handed. **TOP TRACK JOCKEY (2021-26):** Harry Cobden 18% Strike rate. **TOP TRACK TRAINER (2021-26):** G & J Moore 16% Strike rate. **FIRST TIME:** 1.15 Dominic's Fault (tongue strap, wind surgery), 1.50 Numitor (wind surgery), 3.35 Brace For Landing (cheek pieces), 12.45 Kotmask (blinkers). **BEATEN FAVOURITES:** 12.15 Pourquoi Pas Papa. **LONGEST TRAVELLER: Digby** (3.05) Ireland; **Minella Trump** (1.50) 178 miles. **STABLE SWITCH:** 12.15 **Fouroneohfever** from G Boughey to B Pauling.

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11.40 FILLIES' HANDICAP
£4,397 (Class 5) 6f 1yds (9 declared)

1	(3)	644134-	● SO SASSY (44) (C&D,F) J Fanshawe 4 9-9	H Crouch	78
2	(8)	L61957-	BINT HAVANA GOLD (28) (D) R Hughes 5 9-7	F Marsh	79
3	(5)	L33313-	ADDARELLA (14) (D) M Botti 4 9-6	M Ghiani	78
4	(9)	44154L-	HELLO LUNA (143) J Portman 4 9-4	C Bishop	76
5	(4)	622893-	COORAMOOK (21) Harry Eustace 4 9-2	L Morris	77
6	(6)	L85L9L-	GRISELDA (67) (D) Miss H Knight 4 9-2	C Fallon	75
7	(1)	431154-	LAHINA BAY (12) (C&D) R Cook & J Bridger 6 9-1	R Clutterbuck	80
8	(7)	12L411-	ALL TOO BEAUTIFUL (19) (C&D,F) R Teal 4 9-1	J Mitchell	77
9	(2)	366915-	CALAFRIO (37) (D) G Baker 5 8-12	O Murphy	★81

VISOR: No. 4 TONGUE STRAP: No. 9 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 2, 5, 9.

SP FORECAST: 11-4 All Too Beautiful, 4 Calafrio, 9-2 So Sassy, 5 Addarella, 7 Cooramook, 12 Lahina Bay, Hello Luna, 14 Bint Havana Gold, 33 Griselda.

2025: No corresponding race.

12.10 BET 10 GET 40 WITH BETMGM HCAP 3YO
£4,397 (5) 1m 1yds (6)

1	(2)	6561-	FLORIDA SUITE (15) (D,F) W Haggas 9-9	C Fallon	70
2	(5)	73731-	CHARLOTTE CORDAY (35) (F) E Walker 9-9	H Crouch	72
3	(4)	346-	● UPSOMDOWNS (61) P Phelan 9-7	P Bradley	73
4	(1)	044452-	CREDIT FORGEDD IT (4) R Hannon 9-4	S M Levey	★75
5	(6)	L82-	JOHN HARRISON (22) A King 9-4	C Bishop	66
6	(3)	7834-	FILLE IMBASSEE (14) M Botti 9-2	M Ghiani	74

BLINKERS: No. 1 HOOD: No. 6.

SP FORECAST: 2 Florida Suite, 3 Charlotte Corday, 7-2 Credit Forgedd It, 6 John Harrison, 8 Fille Imbassee, 14 Upsomdowns.

2025: No corresponding race.

12.40 RESTRICTED MAIDEN STAKES 3YO
£5,400 (5) 1m 1yds (10)

1	(8)		GOLDFINDER P Chamings 9-7	C Bishop	–
2	(3)		TONYFROMHR J Osborne 9-7	S M Levey	–
3	(2)	555-	FOOTHOLD (122) M Tregoning 9-5	H Davies	★75
4	(9)	5542-	● MASKATTO (65) A Balding 9-5	O Murphy	73
5	(10)	L-	SERRAGASSO (12) C Hobson 9-5	M Ghiani	35
6	(5)		SI WHITE Sir M Prescott 9-5	L Morris	–
7	(7)	7-	TERRANOBLE (32) D Coakley 9-5	G Bass	64
8	(6)		DOR'S DAZZLER D Ivory 9-2	J F Egan	–
9	(1)		GOLDUST WOMAN Ollie Sangster 9-2	H Crouch	–
10	(4)		PANGBOURNE R Teal 9-0	C Fallon	–

SP FORECAST: 7-4 Maskatto, 7-2 Foothold, 4 Goldust Woman, 10 Tonyfromhr, 12 Si White, Pangbourne, 16 Goldfinder, Dor's Dazzler, 20 Others.

2025: Solar Pass 9-0, Callum Hutchinson 4-1 (A Balding), drawn (7), 9 ran.

TRACK FACTS: GOING: Standard. Left Handed. **TOP TRACK JOCKEY (2021-26):** Luke Morris 10% Strike rate. **TOP TRACK TRAINER (2021-26):** G & J Moore 15% Strike rate. **FIRST TIME:** 1.10 Fool Again (blinkers), 1.45 Spaceage Love Song (cheek pieces), Banksman (cheek pieces), 2.52 Edergole's Gift (cheek pieces, tongue strap), 3.29 Friday Again (cheek pieces), Sanditon (visor), 11.40 Griselda (wind surgery). **BEATEN FAVOURITES:** 11.40 Calafrio(hcp). 1.45 Mio Amico(hcp). 2.52 Kondratiev Wave(hcp). **DRAW:** Little effect. **LONGEST TRAVELLER: Union Island** (1.10), **Pride Of Donegal** (2.20), **Sanditon** (3.29) 270 miles. **STABLE SWITCH:** 3.29 **Tam Lin** from Alice Haynes to A Carson.

THE SCOUT

11.40 So Sassy	1.45 Jack Langley
12.10 Upsomdowns	2.20 Westcombe
12.40 Maskatto	2.52 Porfin
1.10 Fool Again	3.29 Thomas Equinas

1.10 ALWAYS GAMBLE RESPONSIBLY AT BETMGM HCAP
£4,397 (5) 1m 1yds (8)

1	(7)	203L65-	VIRTUE PATIENCE (26) (C) A Perrett 4 9-9	C Fallon	★80
2	(3)	1429LL-	MY AWELE (39) C Allen 5 9-8	D Keenan	79
3	(1)	111448-	UNION ISLAND (23) (D) (T) C Johnston 5 9-7	J Mitchell	75
4	(6)	704732-	PITNEY (21) (D) M Attwater 5 9-7	P Bradley	76
5	(4)	423533-	WAY TO DUBAI (3) (D) M Appleby 7 9-7	H Davies	75
6	(5)	83/0586-	REPERTOIRE (64) (D,F) D M Simcock 10 9-6	Taryn Langley(5)	78
7	(8)	025L8L-	MANHATTAN CHUTE (12) J & S Best 4 9-5	P Cosgrave	75
8	(2)	5/LL849-	● FOOL AGAIN (12) A Watson 4 9-4	L Morris	76

BLINKERS: No. 8 VISOR: No. 4 TONGUE STRAP: No. 2 CHEEK PIECES: No. 5.

SP FORECAST: 9-4 Pitney, 5-2 Way To Dubai, 4 Virtue Patience, 7 Repertoire, 14 Union Island, 16 My Awele, Fool Again, Manhattan Chute.

2025: No corresponding race.

1.45 MIDNITE A NEXT GENERATION BETTING APP HCAP
£3,768 (6) 1m 4f (11)

1	(11)	313521-	MR NUGGET (6) (F) D M Simcock 5 10-0(5ex)	H Crouch	66
2	(1)	6/L4-	MARINE (32) G & J Moore 8 9-8	Mr Jude Fernandes(7)	54
3	(2)	65098L-	BOSTON RUN (17) S Dow 4 9-7	J F Egan	68
4	(6)	625131-	● JACK LANGLEY (31) (C&D) S Dow 4 9-6	P Bradley	67
5	(10)	574547-	MIO AMICO (15) Michael Keady 4 9-6	K S McHugh(7)	69
6	(7)	2L8LL9-	LUISA (26) C Hobson 4 9-4	M Ghiani	53
7	(4)	627597-	KAARESS (19) M Attwater 5 9-3	R Kavanagh(5)	65
8	(9)	21126L-	BANKSMAN (12) Miss S West 4 9-3	C Bishop	68
9	(5)	L63672-	DUBAI HARBOUR (19) (C) P Phelan 6 9-2	R Clutterbuck	★70
10	(3)	L40275-	BRAMBLE JELLY (75) D F Davis 5 8-9	B Ffrench-Davis(5)	61
11	(8)	LL66/4P-	SPACEAGE LOVE SONG (201) M Bell 4 8-6	L Morris	60

CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 11 HOOD: No. 4.

SP FORECAST: 2 Mr Nugget, 5-2 Jack Langley, 4 Dubai Harbour, 10 Mio Amico, 14 Marine, 16 Bramble Jelly, Spaceage Love Song, Kaaress, 33 Others.

2025: No corresponding race.

THE SCOUT'S SCOOP SIX HINTS

Leg 1 LUCKY ONE (No 11) (1.15 Sandown)	**Leg 4 GUSTAVIAN (No 2)** (3.05 Sandown)
Leg 2 TRANSMISSION (No 1) (1.30 Wincanton)	**Leg 5 ALL IN YOU (No 5)** (3.35 Sandown)
Leg 3 GOT A DREAM (No 1) (2.40 Wincanton)	**Leg 6 KILWAUGHTER (No 8)** (3.50 Wincanton)

LINGFIELD SKYSPORTSRACING

2.20 MIDNITE ARE UPPING THE BETTING GAME HCAP
£5,653 (4) 1m 4f (9)

1	(8)	3/42102-	PRIDE OF DONEGAL (29) (D) (T) C Johnston 4 9-13	J Mitchell	83
2	(9)	141792-	KIMEKO GLORY (32) (F) C Hills 4 9-9	H Crouch	81
3	(3)	348985-	EDUCATOR (17) (C&D) Miss H Knight 7 9-8	C Fallon	82
4	(7)	94/4211-	● WESTCOMBE (14) (D,S) Sir M Prescott 4 9-7	L Morris	84
5	(1)	762422-	CHARLIE'S CHOICE (14) (D) D M Simcock 6 9-6	Taryn Langley(5)	★88
6	(4)	L46U55-	RAINTOWN (32) (C&D) J S Moore 6 9-4	Taylor Fisher(3)	82
7	(2)	8L2763-	EUPATOR (14) R Hannon 4 9-2	S M Levey	83
8	(6)	L80588-	ENTHUSED (7) (D) James Owen 9 8-10	D Keenan	80
9	(5)	430665-	OCEAN HEIGHTS (12) (D) D Pipe 9 8-10	J Dace(5)	82

BLINKERS: No. 7 TONGUE STRAP: No. 8 CHEEK PIECES: No. 6.

SP FORECAST: 5-4 Westcombe, 9-2 Pride Of Donegal, 5 Kimeko Glory, 13-2 Charlie's Choice, 7 Eupator, 20 Educator, 25 Ocean Heights, 33 Enthused, Raintown.

2025: Knockbrex 5-9-13, Jack Mitchell 4-1 (C Johnston), drawn (5), 9 ran.

2.52 HANDICAP (DIV 1)
£3,768 (6) 7f 1yds (9)

1	(3)	741112-	DANDY KHAN (14) (C&D) J Boyle 4 9-9	H Crouch	69
2	(7)	L80523-	CILL MOCHEALLOG (22) (D) D Ivory 5 9-8	J F Egan	69
3	(2)	252168-	EDERGOLE'S GIFT (30) (C&D,F) C Allen 5 9-7	D Keenan	★71
4	(9)	505040-	CALI CASE (7) Joe Ponting 4 9-7	Charlie Tucker(7)	67
5	(5)	522327-	BLUE EMPRESS (7) A Watson 4 9-6	Harry Vigors(7)	70
6	(4)	90/5408-	RESILIENT LADY (133) G Brown 4 9-3	C Bishop	67
7	(8)	754643-	KONDRATIEV WAVE (26) (C,D) A Carroll 9 9-2	W Carson	69
8	(1)	9L6009-	● PORFIN (33) (C&D) P McEntee 8 8-9	Grace McEntee	60
9	(6)	870949-	INVINCIBLE STORM (15) E De Giles 4 8-9	L Morris	64

BLINKERS: Nos. 2, 5, 9 VISOR: No. 7
TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 3, 4 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 3, 8.

SP FORECAST: 7-4 Dandy Khan, 3 Kondratiev Wave, 7-2 Cill Mocheallog, 8 Blue Empress, 10 Edergole's Gift, 14 Porfin, 33 Cali Case, Invincible Storm, 50 Resilient Lady.

2025: Tadreeb 7-9-8, Oliver Searle(5) 7-4 Fav (B Millman), drawn (7), 8 ran.

3.29 HANDICAP (DIV 2)
£3,768 (6) 7f 1yds (9)

1	(2)	31L502-	TOUSSAROK (7) (D) A Carroll 8 9-9	L Morris	69
2	(6)	524706-	NAVAL ENSIGN (17) Jack Jones 4 9-9	C Fallon	65
3	(7)	82LU93-	SANDITON (17) (F) (T) C Johnston 4 9-8	J Mitchell	67
4	(9)	744723-	● THOMAS EQUINAS (60) (D) D Ivory 7 9-7	J F Egan	67
5	(5)	609316-	TAM LIN (30) (D) A Carson 4 9-6	W Carson	68
6	(1)	52/4788-	FRIDAY AGAIN (19) S Dow 4 9-2	S M Levey	★71
7	(8)	6L7LU4-	MIRAFLORES (17) R Cook & J Bridger 4 8-9	Grace McEntee	67
8	(4)	LL00LL-	LASSWADE (19) E De Giles 4 8-9	G Mangan	40
9	(3)	L9L/LL-	HANNAHS STORY (26) D Steele 5 8-9	Josephine Gordon	–

VISOR: No. 3 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 7, 8 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 4, 6.

SP FORECAST: 9-4 Toussarok, 3 Sanditon, 9-2 Thomas Equinas, 6 Tam Lin, 7 Naval Ensign, 8 Miraflores, 25 Friday Again, 66 Lasswade, 100 Hannahs Story.

2025: Secret Strength 6-9-8, David Allan 3-1 (S Lycett), drawn (6), 8 ran.

5.00 HANDICAP 3YO
£4,397 (Class 5) 7f 14yds (6 declared)

1	(1)	6581-	DAGGER STRIKE (5) (D) A Watson 10-1(6ex)	W Cox	75
2	(3)	669223-	SOMEBODY (21) R Spencer 9-6	G Wood	74
3	(2)	633-	EMILIA CASANOVA (15) K R Burke 9-3	P-L Jamin	69
4	(4)	L49236-	SAILOR BATT (78) D & N Barron 9-1	L Edmunds	76
5	(6)	3L6424-	ARCHANGEL JOSEPI (15) B Ellison 9-1	B Robinson	73
6	(5)	LL0-1	● DARTREY (2) (C) R Beckett 9-1(6ex)	E Greatrex	★82

BLINKERS: No. 2 TONGUE STRAP: No. 2 CHEEK PIECES: No. 5.

SP FORECAST: 11-8 Dartrey, 13-8 Dagger Strike, 15-2 Somebody, 10 Emilia Casanova, 14 Archangel Josepi, 16 Sailor Batt.

2025: Whizz By 9-3, Sean Levey 7-2 (T Ward), drawn (6), 10 ran.

5.30 BET 10 GET 40 WITH BETMGM FILLIES' HCAP
£4,397 (5) 7f 14yds (10)

1	(1)	108467-	QUANDARY (19) (D) E Bethell 6 9-9	C Rodriguez	79
2	(4)	814328-	HILLTOP (19) (D) D & C Kubler 5 9-9	R Hornby	82
3	(8)	115008-	PARTY BEAR (178) (C&D) K R Burke 4 9-6	S Gray	80
4	(6)	325054-	● DIAMONT KATIE (196) K R Burke 4 9-6	P-L Jamin	79
5	(2)	L55236-	TITIAN BLUE (14) M Appleby 4 9-3	Jason Watson	81
6	(7)	643946-	BRAZILIAN ROSE (14) (D) R Menzies 5 9-2	Kaiya Fraser	77
7	(9)	402274-	HOLY FIRE (19) C Fellowes 6 8-13	C Shepherd	★84
8	(5)	37/863-	RIKISSA (103) R Beckett 4 8-11	E Greatrex	79
9	(3)	L4L253-	AMICA (21) (F) J Channon 4 8-10	N Currie	83
10	(10)	5422L4-	DREAM ILLUSION (26) (D) M Herrington 4 8-10	D E Hogan	81

VISOR: No. 7 CHEEK PIECES: No. 8 HOOD: No. 6.

SP FORECAST: 4 Rikissa, 11-2 Holy Fire, 6 Diamont Katie, 7 Amica, Hilltop, Titian Blue, 8 Brazilian Rose, 12 Dream Illusion, Quandary, 14 Party Bear.

2025: Liv My Life 4-9-8, Marco Ghiani 22-1 (S C Williams), drawn (10), 9 ran.

6.00 HANDICAP (DIV 1)
£4,711 (6) 7f 14yds (11)

1	(10)	L48776-	HOMER STOKES (82) (C&D,F) D & N Barron 8 9-9	C Rodriguez	59
2	(1)	99/8629-	WAR MEMORIAL (44) L Mullaney 5 9-9	B Sanderson	65
3	(8)	947533-	● VOLENDAM (15) A Carroll 4 9-8	Jack Doughty	63
4	(7)	353351-	BAD HABITS (7) (D) R Carr 4 9-8	JP Sullivan	64
5	(5)	677466-	MOYOWASI (14) I Williams 4 9-7	E Greatrex	66
6	(4)	069770-	ROARING RALPH (18) (C&D) M Dods 6 9-7	M Winn	59
7	(6)	2326U2-	IMOLA (15) Joey Ramsden 5 9-6	L Edmunds	★67
8	(11)	6/7LL-	SUMMER EVENING (7) D Flood 4 9-6	Kaiya Fraser	59
9	(2)	649L59-	YOSHIMI (22) (C,D) M Herrington 9 9-5	J Peate	59
10	(9)	344805-	BOSSY PARKER (42) (D) T & S Barclay 6 9-0	Z Wheatley(3)	65
11	(3)	L7L970-	SHOPTILYOUDROP (14) P Kirby 4 9-0	A Brookes(3)	55

BLINKERS: Nos. 6, 10 CHEEK PIECES: No. 9.

SP FORECAST: 11-4 Bad Habits, 3 Imola, 5 Volendam, 8 Moyowasi, Homer Stokes, 10 Bossy Parker, 12 Roaring Ralph, 16 War Memorial, 20 Others.

2025: No corresponding race.

TRACK FACTS: GOING: Standard. Left Handed. **TOP TRACK JOCKEY (2021-26):** Lewis Edmunds 11% Strike rate. **TOP TRACK TRAINER (2021-26):** M Appleby 10% Strike rate. **FIRST TIME:** 5.00 Archangel Josepi (cheek pieces), 6.30 Overlooked (blinkers), 8.00 Sovereign Applause (tongue strap, wind surgery), 8.30 Return With Gold (wind surgery).

SOUTHWELL SSR

THE SCOUT

5.00 Dartrey	7.00 Bin Ajwad
5.30 Diamont Katie	7.30 Remi Mae
6.00 Volendam	8.00 NUNC EST BIBENDUM (nap)
6.30 Up The Monk	8.30 Tortured Soul

6.30 HANDICAP (DIV 2)
£4,711 (6) 7f 14yds (11)

1	(4)	342533-	OVERLOOKED (16) H Bethell 5 9-9	P J McDonald	★66
2	(2)	4400L0-	DARK DREAMER (16) M Murphy 5 9-8	C Shepherd	54
3	(7)	5670-	LADY MARGRET (70) A Carroll 4 9-8	Jack Doughty	58
4	(5)	924470-	OPERATION GIMCRACK (78) B Smart 6 9-8	D Nolan	62
5	(9)	313667-	● UP THE MONK (17) (C) M Appleby 4 9-7	A Rawlinson	60
6	(8)	800266-	CUBAN FIESTA (17) (F) D P Quinn 5 9-7	G Wood	65
7	(1)	447605-	FISTRAL BEACH (7) (C&D) J Mackie 5 9-6	L Edmunds	63
8	(6)	834156-	WOODRAFFF (18) (D) R Carr 5 9-5	JP Sullivan	64
9	(10)	3U0LL0-	OUTRACE (39) (F) R Hannon 6 9-2	T Greatrex	60
10	(3)	927585-	MY BOY JACK (14) K Frost 7 9-0	Joanna Mason	56
11	(11)	53L44L-	BARNEY'S BAY (65) (C) D Shaw 8 9-0	C Hardie	57

BLINKERS: No. 1 VISOR: Nos. 6, 11 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 6 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 2, 5, 9.

SP FORECAST: 9-4 Overlooked, 5 Up The Monk, 11-2 Operation Gimcrack, 6 Cuban Fiesta, 7 Woodrafff, 10 Fistral Beach, 12 My Boy Jack, 20 Dark Dreamer, Outrace, 25 Others.

2025: No corresponding race.

7.00 HANDICAP
£5,653 (4) 1m 13yds (9)

1	(1)	437111-	● BIN AJWAD (43) (C&D,F) J Tate 4 9-10	R Hornby	93
2	(6)	64/3418-	HELMSLEY (31) I Furtado 4 9-9	D Nolan	86
3	(3)	1102L6-	BRAVO ZULU (8) (C,D) D Loughnane 5 9-9	Jack Doughty	85
4	(4)	904205-	TALIS EVOLVERE (31) (D) R Hannon 6 9-9	A Voikhansky	95
5	(8)	141143-	TRIBAL WISDOM (8) (C&D) I Williams 7 9-5	E Greatrex	92
6	(7)	380260-	UNITED APPROACH (16) J Osborne 6 9-4	C Shepherd	★96
7	(9)	327754-	SIGNCASTLE CITY (63) (D) R Hannon 6 9-2	T Greatrex	91
8	(2)	031422-	GOLDEN PHARAOH (43) S Dixon 5 9-1	K O'Neill	94
9	(5)	083463-	GRABAJABBA (16) (C) M Appleby 5 9-0	A Rawlinson	93

TONGUE STRAP: No. 5 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 3, 8.

SP FORECAST: 2 Bin Ajwad, 7-2 Golden Pharaoh, 7 Tribal Wisdom, Talis Evolvere, 8 Grabajabba, 10 Helmsley, 12 Signcastle City, 14 United Approach, 25 Bravo Zulu.

2025: No corresponding race.

DRAW: No advantage. **LONGEST TRAVELLER: Dartrey** (5.00) & **Rikissa** (5.30) 181 miles. **STABLE SWITCH:** 6.00 **Bossy Parker** from Mrs Stella Barclay to T & S Barclay. 6.30 **Lady Margret** from D Killahena & G McPherson to A Carroll. 7.30 **Jungle Ruler** from J P O'Brien in Ireland to M Appleby. 8.00 **Doublethetrouble** from J Butler to L Wadham. 8.30 **Educate** from J Goldie to M Hammond.

7.30 NOVICE STAKES 3YO
£5,400 (4) 6f 16yds (8)

1	(7)	1-	JUNGLE RULER (85) M Appleby 9-11	Jason Watson	85
2	(2)	5L-	ALVIN (225) G Scott 9-4	C Shepherd	76
3	(3)	99-	FICKLE MCSELFISH (15) T Coyle & K Wood 9-4	D Nolan	55
4	(8)	3-	FOXTROT FLYER (97) (S) K R Burke 9-4	S Gray	77
5	(1)	72-	LEONETTO (37) Harry Charlton 9-4	C Rodriguez	67
6	(5)	3-	SOUTHERN WARRIOR (15) (F) G Scott 9-4	Liam Wright(5)	74
7	(4)	7-	QUEEN OF THE NIGHT (17) Ollie Sangster 8-13	E Greatrex	45
8	(6)	72-	● REMI MAE (120) (F) A Balding 8-13	P J McDonald	★86

SP FORECAST: 2 Jungle Ruler, 9-4 Remi Mae, 9-2 Foxtrot Flyer, 7 Leonetto, 8 Southern Warrior, 14 Alvin, 50 Queen Of The Night, Fickle Mcselfish.

2025: Rebel's Gamble 9-7, Clifford Lee 11-4 (K R Burke), drawn (2), 11 ran.

8.00 HANDICAP
£3,768 (6) 2m 102yds (10)

1	(9)	332431-	DAARIS (7) K Frost 7 10-0	A Voikhansky	67
2	(7)	623356-	DOUBLETHETROUBLE (J13) (D) L Wadham 8 9-13	C Shepherd	68
3	(3)	2/L0L31-	● NUNC EST BIBENDUM (32) (D) G & J Moore 5 9-12	L Edmunds	65
4	(10)	774212-	FASCINATING SHADOW (19) (D,F) James Owen 8 9-9	Jason Watson	★70
5	(2)	2L/6661-	ARC ZOOSVE (19) (D) N King 5 9-9	R Hornby	69
6	(5)	0LL/47L-	ACHNAMARA (J14) (D) P Kirby 7 9-9	C Hardie	64
7	(6)	LL5/83-	SOVEREIGN APPLAUSE (J23) R Menzies 4 9-8	Kaiya Fraser	60
8	(8)	858/2L3-	EDWARDTHENINTH (15) (F) Ruth Jefferson 5 9-6	Z Wheatley(3)	68
9	(1)	3/54208-	DIFFERENT DRUM (38) (D) L Allan 5 9-6	Joanna Mason	68
10	(4)	0LL323-	ARCIMBOLDO (46) M Sowersby 4 8-8	A Brookes(3)	63

BLINKERS: No. 1 VISOR: No. 4 TONGUE STRAP: No. 7
CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 2, 5, 6.

SP FORECAST: 3 Arc Zoosve, 7-2 Daaris, 4 Nunc Est Bibendum, 5 Fascinating Shadow, 8 Edwardtheninth, 10 Arcimboldo, 16 Doublethetrouble, 20 Different Drum, 25 Others.

2025: No corresponding race.

8.30 MAKE THE MOVE TO MIDNITE HANDICAP
£4,397 (5) 1m 3f 23yds (10)

1	(1)	1L8738-	BEARWITH (14) (C&D) H Bethell 8 9-12	P J McDonald	70
2	(10)	0L7361-	● TORTURED SOUL (26) (C&D) A Carroll 6 9-11	Jack Doughty	74
3	(6)	43724L-	BRODIE'S BOY (26) A Carroll 5 9-11	Jason Watson	75
4	(9)	43909L-	SHAHBAZ (12) A Watson 6 9-10	W Cox	66
5	(2)	65L/255-	KING'S HAND (42) Sir M Prescott 4 9-8	D E Hogan	74
6	(8)	968/131-	RETURN WITH GOLD (J193) (C&D,F) O Pears 4 9-8	C Hardie	67
7	(5)	422247-	EDUCATE (18) (C) M Hammond 5 9-8	A Brookes(3)	74
8	(4)	735716-	GOLSPIE (5) P Morris 6 9-8	D Nolan	74
9	(7)	79/9563-	ARTH'S GOLD (16) (F) R Hannon 4 9-7	A Voikhansky	73
10	(3)	7654L-	BLACKWATER LILLY (14) B Ellison 6 9-0	B Robinson	★76

TONGUE STRAP: No. 7 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 3, 7, 9, 10.

SP FORECAST: 3 Tortured Soul, 9-2 King's Hand, 5 Arth's Gold, Return With Gold, 10 Educate, Golspie, Brodie's Boy, 12 Bearwith, 16 Others.

2025: No corresponding race.

BEATEN FAVOURITES: 5.00 Archangel Josepi. 5.30 Titian Blue(hcp). 6.30 Operation Gimcrack(hcp), Overlooked(hcp). 7.00 Talis Evolvere(hcp). 7.30 Leonetto. 8.30 King's Hand(hcp), Return With Gold.

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS & PRICES

AYR: Soft-good to soft in places

12.30—KINGS CHAMPION (S Bowen, 11-4 fav) 1; Sleedagh (7-2) 2; Solid Performer (18-1) 3. 11 ran. 12l, ¾l. (O Murphy). Tote: £3.75; pl £1.50, £1.40, £3.40. exacta: £12.90. trifecta: £103.80. CSF: £13.67.

1.00—SANILAM (B Hughes, 11-4 2nd fav) 1; Wilstar (5-6 fav) 2; Like Minded (7-2) 3. 13 ran. 3½l, nk. (A M Thomson). Tote: £4.00; pl £1.20, £1.10, £1.50. exacta: £8.00. trifecta: £22.30. CSF: £5.90.

1.30—BALLYFORT (B Lynn, 13-8 fav) 1; Southey (11-2) 2; Rock On Jet (3-1) 3. H'cap 4 ran. 1½l, 7½l. (N Alexander). Tote: £2.63; exacta: £10.40. trifecta: £19.50. CSF: £9.54. Non-runner: Powerofjet.

2.00—SO MANY ROADS (T Gillard, 4-1 jt fav) 1; Velvet Vulcan (25-1) 2; Forest Blaze (6-1) 3; Raceview Road (28-1) 4. H'cap 19 ran. hd, 6l, 5l. (D Whillans; 4-1 jtfav Big Storm Brewing). Tote: £6.20; pl £1.90, £4.80, £1.50, £6.30. exacta: £192.20. tricast: £638.92. trifecta: £1324.60. CSF: £113.11.

2.30—COWBOY COOPER (Craig Nichol, 15-2) 1; Wal Buck's (9-1) 2; Dangerous Touch (4-1 fav) 3. H'cap 14 ran. 6½l, 1¾l. (D Whillans). Tote: £8.50; pl £2.40, £3.10, £2.40. exacta: £92.50. tricast: £321.81. trifecta: £468.60. CSF: £79.47.

3.00—MILCREE (Sean Quinlan, 6-1) 1; Karafon (7-1) 2; Jipcot (6-1) 3. H'cap 9 ran. 4¼l, 1¾l. (N Richards; 7-2 fav Junker D'allier). Tote: £7.00; pl £2.20, £2.50, £2.20. exacta: £48.20. tricast: £266.31. trifecta: £313.70. CSF: £48.51. Non-runner: Big John Wayne.

3.30—IKARAK (S Bowen, 10-3 2nd fav) 1; Highland Fashion (7-2) 2; Whistle Stop Tour (15-2) 3. H'cap 10 ran. 1¾l, 7½l. (O Murphy; 13-8 fav Authorized Mission). Tote: £4.34; pl £1.50, £1.60, £2.00. exacta: £16.20. tricast: £82.23. trifecta: £68.60. CSF: £15.67. Non-runner: Phantomofthepoints.

Placepot: £63.00
(Race 1) 6, 9, 10; (2) 10, 12, 7; (3) 2; (4) 10, 14, 1, 5; (5) 8, 1, 3; (6) 10, 5, 3;
Quadpot: £39.20

CHELMSFORD CITY: Standard

12.42—EM FOUR (C J Whiteley, 9-4 2nd fav) 1; Charlie Mason (5-4 fav) 2; Merrimack (9-1) 3. H'cap 7 ran. nk, hd. (J Osborne). Tote: £3.25; pl £1.40, £1.40. exacta: £6.00. trifecta: £26.20. CSF: £5.41.

1.12—GEMMARI (S M Levey, 15-2) 1; Cardinal Point (7-4 fav) 2; Hebridean Nomad (4-1) 3. H'cap 7 ran. 6½l, 10l. (R Hannon). Tote: £8.50; pl £2.90, £1.50. exacta: £22.10. tricast: £60.52. trifecta: £77.40. CSF: £20.96. Non-runner: Clansman.

1.42—COOL MOLLY (P-L Jamin, 7-2) 1; Thecoffeepoddotco (6-4 fav) 2; Mad Dash (11-4 2nd fav) 3. 8 ran. nk, 3¾l. (Ollie Sangster). Tote: £4.50; pl £1.30, £1.10, £1.40. exacta: £10.00. trifecta: £23.90. CSF: £9.49.

2.12—REVOLUTIONISE (J Dace, 5-1) 1; Arantes Nascimento (11-4 fav) 2; Space Cowboy (33-1) 3. H'cap 9 ran. 1l, 1¾l. (S C Williams). Tote: £6.70; pl £2.20, £1.60, £7.30. exacta: £24.10. tricast: £416.73. trifecta: £617.40. CSF: £19.32.

2.42—ANEIRIN'S SWORD (R Hornby, 14-1) 1; THREE SOCKS ON (L Edmunds, 3-1 2nd fav) 1; Reason's Power (7-2) 3. H'cap 8 ran. dht, ½l. (J Osborne, R Teal; 13-8 fav Thanh Nam). Tote: Aneirin's Sword £7.60, Three Socks On £2.00; pl Aneirin's Sword £4.00, Three Socks On £1.40, Reason's Power £1.40. exacta: Aneirin's Sword, Three Socks On £38.80, Three Socks On, Aneirin's Sword £25.20. tricast: Aneirin's Sword, Three Socks On, Reason's Power £92.30, Three Socks On, Aneirin's Sword, Reason's Power £76.77. trifecta: Aneirin's Sword, Three Socks On, Reason's Power £149.00, Three Socks On, Aneirin's Sword, Reason's Power £87.70. CSF: Aneirin's Sword, Three Socks On £28.29, Three Socks On, Aneirin's Sword £21.97. Non-runner: Telling Time.

3.12—NEBULA STARS (Georgia Dobie, 5-1) 1; Arthur Rose (15-2) 2; Al Waqidi (6-4 fav) 3. H'cap 9 ran. 1¾l, hd. (Craig Benton). Tote: £6.50; pl £1.90, £2.40, £1.30. exacta: £44.10. tricast: £83.33. trifecta: £138.40. CSF: £42.93.

3.42—TIME TESTED (H Crouch, 11-8 fav) 1; Melek Alreeh (7-1) 2; Midnight Rumble (12-1) 3. H'cap 8 ran. nk, ¾l. (M Bell). Tote: £2.38; pl £1.10, £2.30, £2.70. exacta: £9.30. tricast: £81.06. trifecta: £90.80. CSF: £12.35.

Jackpot: £29,345.90, with £14,052.95 carried over.
Placepot: £22.40
(Race 1) 2, 1; (2) 5, 8; (3) 4, 2, 6; (4) 4, 8, 7; (5) 5, , 6; (6) 9, 5, 1;
Quadpot: £6.70

VITAL STATISTICS

IN-FORM TRAINERS (last 10 days) G Scott 100% (2 wins and 2 places from 4 runners), R Hannon 75% (1/2/4), H Fry 60% (2/1/5), E Lavelle 57% (2/6/14), M Botti 57% (3/1/7), E Walker 56% (3/2/9), J Scott 55% (2/4/11), O Murphy 51% (10/10/39), A Carroll 50% (2/9/22), Daisy Hitchins 50% (1/1/4), J Portman 50% (1/1/4), K Bailey & M Nicholls 50% (2/2/8), Nick Scholfield 50% (3/0/6).

IN-FORM JOCKEYS Sean Levey 78% (1 wins and 6 places from 9 runners), Hector Crouch 71% (7/5/17), Lorcan Williams 67% (2/4/9), David Nolan 64% (2/5/11), Robert Dunne 62% (2/3/8), Pierre Jamin 60% (1/2/5), Callum Shepherd 59% (6/4/17), Sean Bowen 56% (10/10/36), Alistair Rawlinson 55% (1/5/11), Callum Pritchard 50% (1/5/12), Miss Olive Nicholls 50% (2/0/4).

FAKENHAM: Abandoned due to frozen track

WOLVERHAMPTON: Standard

4.30—BETTIES BAY (L Morris, 15-2) 1; Cargin Bhui (5-6 fav) 2; Initial Blue (33-1) 3. H'cap 11 ran. hd, 2l. (James Owen). Tote: £8.50; pl £1.60, £1.30, £7.30. exacta: £20.70. tricast: £229.66. trifecta: £597.30. CSF: £14.86. Non-runner: Early Release.

5.00—MIDNIGHT CALL (M Slater, 15-8 fav) 1; Dubai Magic (25-1) 2; Lion Ring (15-2) 3. 9 ran. nk, ¾l. (A Carroll). Tote: £2.88; pl £1.30, £4.20, £1.70. exacta: £30.40. trifecta: £198.60. CSF: £55.76.

5.30—ROGUE DE VEGA (C Hardie, 9-4 2nd fav) 1; Colors Of Freedom (5-2) 2; Juno Star (15-8 fav) 3. 8 ran. 1¾l, hd. (A Brittain). Tote: £3.25; pl £1.40, £1.20, £1.20. exacta: £9.20. trifecta: £20.40. CSF: £8.16. Non-runner: Forest Gunner.

6.00—STELLAR VISION (M Ghiani, 4-9 fav) 1; Tommo's Ginjaninja (28-1) 2; Cincinnati Gold (10-1) 3. 7 ran. 3¾l, hd. (S C Williams). Tote: £1.50; pl £1.10, £7.30. exacta: £22.90. trifecta: £89.10. CSF: £21.02. Non-runner: Ar Rayyan.

6.30—CHIFA (L Morris, 13-8 fav) 1; Landlordtothestars (15-2) 2; Al Hofzan (18-1) 3. H'cap 7 ran. 1l, hd. (E De Giles). Tote: £2.63; pl £1.50, £2.60. exacta: £11.30. trifecta: £62.40. CSF: £14.59.

7.00—TONAL (R Kavanagh, 3-1) 1; Threatening (5-2 jt fav) 2; Studious (7-1) 3. H'cap 8 ran. 1½l, 2¼l. (I Williams; 5-2 jtfav Al Rufaa). Tote: £4.00; pl £1.40, £1.70, £2.00. exacta: £15.90. tricast: £46.95. trifecta: £60.70. CSF: £11.06.

7.30—EMPEROR'S SON (D Nolan, 4-1 jt 2nd fav) 1; Speed Of Maajid (11-4 fav) 2; Beaumadier (4-1 jt 2nd fav) 3. H'cap 8 ran. 1l, ¾l. (R Fahey). Tote: £5.00; pl £1.30, £1.70, £2.00. exacta: £12.50. tricast: £46.85. trifecta: £48.00. CSF: £15.83.

8.00—SCENARIO (M Ghiani, 5-1) 1; Naughty Niall (9-2 jt 2nd fav) 2; Take The Boat (22-1) 3. H'cap 9 ran. shd, 1¾l. (A Carroll; 7-4 fav Moonlight Bomb). Tote: £6.00; pl £1.50, £1.80, £4.90. exacta: £10.40. tricast: £455.61. trifecta: £348.80. CSF: £27.50. Non-runner: Rogue Identity.

8.30—LATIN (P Bradley, 10-3) 1; Seraphic (17-2) 2; Eutropia (18-1) 3. H'cap 10 ran. ns, 2l. (James Owen; 11-4 fav Law Supreme). Tote: £4.34; pl £1.60, £2.40, £4.10. exacta: £10.10. tricast: £454.58. trifecta: £303.90. CSF: £33.15.

Placepot: £8.00
(Race 1) 7, 2, 12; (2) 6, 2, 5; (3) 5, 2, 4; (4) 5, 7; (5) 2, 5; (6) 7, 2, 3;
Quadpot: £3.20

WORLD OF SPORT

Venus goes wild for record in Melbourne

TENNIS

VENUS WILLIAMS is set to play in the Australian Open for the first time in five years after being given a wild card for the singles in Melbourne.

The 45-year-old, who reached the Australian Open final in 2003 and 2017.

WILLIAMS

The seven-time Grand Slam winner returned to action for the first time in 16 months in July, going on to play the US Open, where she lost in the first round of the singles but reached the quarter-finals of the women's doubles with Leylah Fernandez.

"I'm excited to be back in Australia and looking forward to competing," said Williams.

"I've had so many incredible memories there, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to return to a place that has meant so much."

Williams will become the oldest woman to play in an Australian Open main draw, surpassing Japan's Kimiko Date, who was 44 in 2015.

THE BIG PICTURE

OBLACH NORDIC ARENA DOBBIACO
LE GRUYÈRE SWITZERLAND

SLIDE RULE: A tight finish in the Tour de Ski men's pursuit in Italy

Brock ready to roll

NFL

BY **KEITH WEBSTER**

BROCK PURDY is accustomed to being written off but now he is five weeks away from having the last laugh.

Four years ago, he was the 262nd – and last – player picked in the Draft, earning him that year's Mr Irrelevant title.

His career with the San Francisco 49ers has been dogged by injuries but when fit, the quarterback is highly relevant, and has his team dreaming of a Super Bowl win in their own stadium next month.

They go into the final game of the regular season tonight against NFC West rivals, Seattle, where the winner take the division title and be the No.1 seed in the play-offs.

Purdy said: "I was dealing with my toe injury but once I started feeling good, I thought 'go do your job, do it well, celebrate with the guys and have fun with it'."

10 to tackle

1. Which American rider won the WSX class in the 2025 FIM Supercross World Championship Canadian Grand Prix?
2. **How many standing backwards somersaults did British former gymnast Lucie Colebeck do in 30 seconds on the roof of the London O2 arena last November to claim a Guinness World Record?**
3. Which Canadian, recently banned following an anti-doping rule violation, won 2016 Olympics women's 100m freestyle swimming gold?
4. **Which England cricketer scored 336 not out against New Zealand in 1933?**
5. How many times has Britain hosted the summer Olympics?
6. **Against whom did Australia rugby union captain Rocky Elsom make his Test debut in 2005?**
7. Which London-born Notts County player appeared for Algeria at the 1986 World Cup?
8. **Which Majors-winning American golfer modernized the sand wedge?**
9. Which British snooker player won the 2006 UK Championship?
10. **Which American was Olympic lightweight boxing gold medallist in 1984?**

RATINGS
0-3 Oh dear
4-6 Small beer
7-9 So near
10 Sporting Seer

ANSWERS: 1 Eli Tomac. 2 17. 3 Penny Oleksiak. 4 Wally Hammond. 5 Three. 6 Samoa. 7 Rachid Harkouk. 8 Gene Sarazen. 9 Peter Ebdon. 10 Pernell Whitaker.

GOLF

TARGETED McIlroy and his wife Erica at the Ryder Cup

Rory: Bradley kept silent on 'horrific' abuse of my Poppy

BY **NEIL McLEMAN**

RORY McILROY has revealed he heard "horrific" abuse directed at his five-year-old daughter at last year's Ryder Cup.

And the Masters champion believes US skipper Keegan Bradley (below) should have done more to calm "by far" the worst crowd atmosphere of his career.

The New York crowd at Bethpage Black took out their anger on Team Europe as Luke Donald's team made history by winning the first four sessions away from home.

Police dogs were deployed on the course during the frenzied Saturday afternoon. Europe won 15-13.

Asked if this Ryder Cup had been the worst crowd he had experienced, McIlroy told The Overlap podcast: "Oh, by far. Look, I don't care if people are saying whatever they're saying to me, even the first tee announcers shouting: '**** you, Rory,' which is nothing compared to the other stuff we heard.

"Erica, my wife, would say she's a grown woman, she's strong, she can handle that, but then when it starts to get into your family, I heard stuff about my daughter Poppy that I couldn't even repeat here. It's horrific.

"It's sort of society and culture at the minute as well. It's that mob mentality where people see other people doing something, and then they think it's OK. And then it sort of builds up."

McIlroy said some US players spoke up to try to stop the abuse of the European players, but added: "Keegan had the biggest platform of the week in being the captain. I feel like he could have said something on that Friday or Saturday night, and he didn't."

The build-up to the new golf season has been overshadowed by the announcement that Brooks Koepka has left LIV Golf. The five-time Major winner is likely to serve a ban before returning to the PGA Tour – or he could tee up on the DP World Tour.

McIlroy, a vocal opponent of LIV, said he would not object to others like Bryson DeChambeau returning.

"They've made the money, but they've paid the consequences in terms of their reputation and some of the things they have lost by going over there," he said.

"If it made the overall tour stronger to have Bryson back and whoever else, I would be OK with it, but I recognise not everyone is in my position – it would be up to the collective group of PGA Tour members to make that decision.

"LIV has elevated the Majors and the Ryder Cup because only four or five times a year do you see all the best players playing together. For golf to be relevant, we need the best players together more often than that."

On LIV's future, he added: "They've spent so much money on this venture and it's not making a return. I don't know how much longer they can keep it going."

Saints want star names to tap into Bath heroics

BOSS CHALLENGING TOP GUNS TO PROVE WORTH

BY **ADAM HATHAWAY**

PHIL DOWSON has challenged Northampton's big guns to show they are top dogs after his second-stringers pulled the plug on Bath last weekend.

In the performance of the Prem season so far, Saints sent a team shorn of most of their stars to face the champions at the Rec last Saturday – and went home with a stunning 41-21 win.

Director of Rugby Dowson has recalled the bulk of his first-choice names for today's visit of Harlequins, ahead of next weekend's mouth-watering European clash with Bordeaux-Begles.

Quins are rank outsiders and face the league leaders on the back of 40-point hammerings from Bristol and Sale.

Dowson has urged Alex Mitchell, Fin Smith and Co to prove they are the main men ahead of the trip to the Kings of Europe by living up to their favourites tag.

Dowson said: "There are lots of players who have had the week off and saw that performance from players in Saints shirts, and that drives our levels.

"I am nervous about it. The narrative last week was that Bath were the form horse and we were not going to be competitive because of the selection.

"We were written off a little bit and the pressure was on Bath, and we could play with real freedom.

"The narrative has flipped now and Quins are a very dangerous side. They will be hugely disappointed with their last two weekends and will be talking about how they want to be seen. They will be wounded."

Scrum-half Mitchell and fly-half Smith start alongside lock Alex Coles and skipper Fraser Dingwall as Dowson makes nine changes to his starting XV from last week.

One survivor is Scotland hooker Robbie Smith, who had last season wrecked by a horrific knee injury, but who is now showing the kind of form needed to win a Six Nations spot. Smith said: "A lot of guys were rested, who then sat at home, enjoyed Christmas and watched us go away and get the win. There is constantly that competition here."

Quins will have Marcus Smith starting as he goes head-to-head with namesake Fin ahead of this year's Six Nations.

Bath, still smarting from that Saints' reverse, host high-flying Exeter at the Rec.

England contenders Ted Hill, Ben Spencer, Ollie Lawrence, Henry Arundell and Guy Pepper will all start.

Chiefs, beaten just once in the league this campaign, keep the same side that handed Leicester a 24-10 Sandy Park beating on Sunday with Immanuel Feyi-Waboso and centre Henry Slade both starting. Boss Rob Baxter warned: "Bath were a good side anyway before they got that slap in the face from Northampton. I'd imagine they've had a very focused training week."

ARCH OVER Archie McParland breaks through to score Saints second try at Bath

A MITCH IN TIME Scrum-half Alex Mitchell is back to pull Saints' strings

Guys who were rested at home watched us go away and get win

SITTING PRETTY Itoje will start on the bench for Saracens tomorrow

ITOJE BOOST FOR BORTHWICK

ENGLAND captain Maro Itoje returns to action tomorrow after over a month off in a huge boost for head coach Steve Borthwick.

Itoje, 31, has finally got over a knee problem and is fit to take a spot on Saracens' bench for their Prem trip to Leicester ahead of England's first pre-Six Nations get-together.

The squad will spend a day in camp next week planning for the tournament, which kicks off for

Leicester v Saracens
Tomorrow, 3pm

BY **ADAM HATHAWAY**

England with the visit of Wales to Allianz Stadium on February 7.

Lock Itoje has not been seen since going off eight minutes from time in England's 27-23 win over Argentina on November 23.

And, after extra time off following the Lions tour, Itoje has only appeared twice for his club all season. Saracens, who halted a run of three league defeats by beating Gloucester last weekend, have hooker Jamie George starting after two appearances off the bench.

Tigers hand a first start since October 11 to scrum-half Jack van Poortvliet in more good news for Borthwick. Van Poortvliet was in camp with England during the autumn but did not play because of shoulder trouble. Another England hopeful, back row Emeka Ilione, is on the bench.

THE WORLD'S GONE DARTS MAD

Staggering growth of game across globe

BY **RICHARD LEWIS**

WHEN Sir Chris Hoy presents the Sid Waddell Trophy to the world champion tonight, darts will celebrate the awarding of the biggest individual prize in the sport's history.

But for the global game it is so much more than this evening's million-pound cheque.

This week is 19 years since the PDC World Championship left the Circus Tavern in Purfleet for its new home at Alexandra Palace, where in 12 months' time the showpiece event switches to an even larger arena at this iconic venue.

Darts has never been bigger – but the growth is not just about what happens in London N22 over Christmas and New Year.

The PDC have expanded their support of affiliate tours to invest £3m into the development of darts across the world over the next three years as the game is creating such an impact globally.

This World Championship, which increased to 128 players, has seen debut wins for players from countries who may never have had the chance to experience such moments – headlined by Kenya's David Munyua.

Equally, never has there been a greater opportunity to make darts 'your career' from leaving school. As Ryan Searle competed in last night's semi-final against Luke Littler, the match said it all. Searle, 38, is a former window cleaner, while Littler, 18, is the teenage superstar driving youngsters. Both players had guaranteed a £200,000 payday whatever the result.

Dave Allen (inset), the PDC's long-time Head of Media, is now becoming their Head of Development, such has been the growth which will now only see darts continue to expand at a professional level around the world.

"When I first joined, we had a tour in Australia, and that was pretty much it," said Allen, who is overseeing his 22nd World Championship.

"Over that period we've had organisations come up in Asia, North America, Scandinavia, which is now actually not just Scandinavia, but the whole Nordic and Baltic region.

"We have a tour in China, we moved into Africa. We are into year two of an agreement in Central and Latin America.

"Last year we had a player from the Bahamas in the World Championship, this year it was Argentina. With Africa, it was the first time that we've had a non-South African qualifier – Kenyan qualifier David Munyua made a huge impact."

Munyua was one of the stories of the first round as he stunned world No.18 Mike De Decker, battling back from 2-0 down to win 3-2.

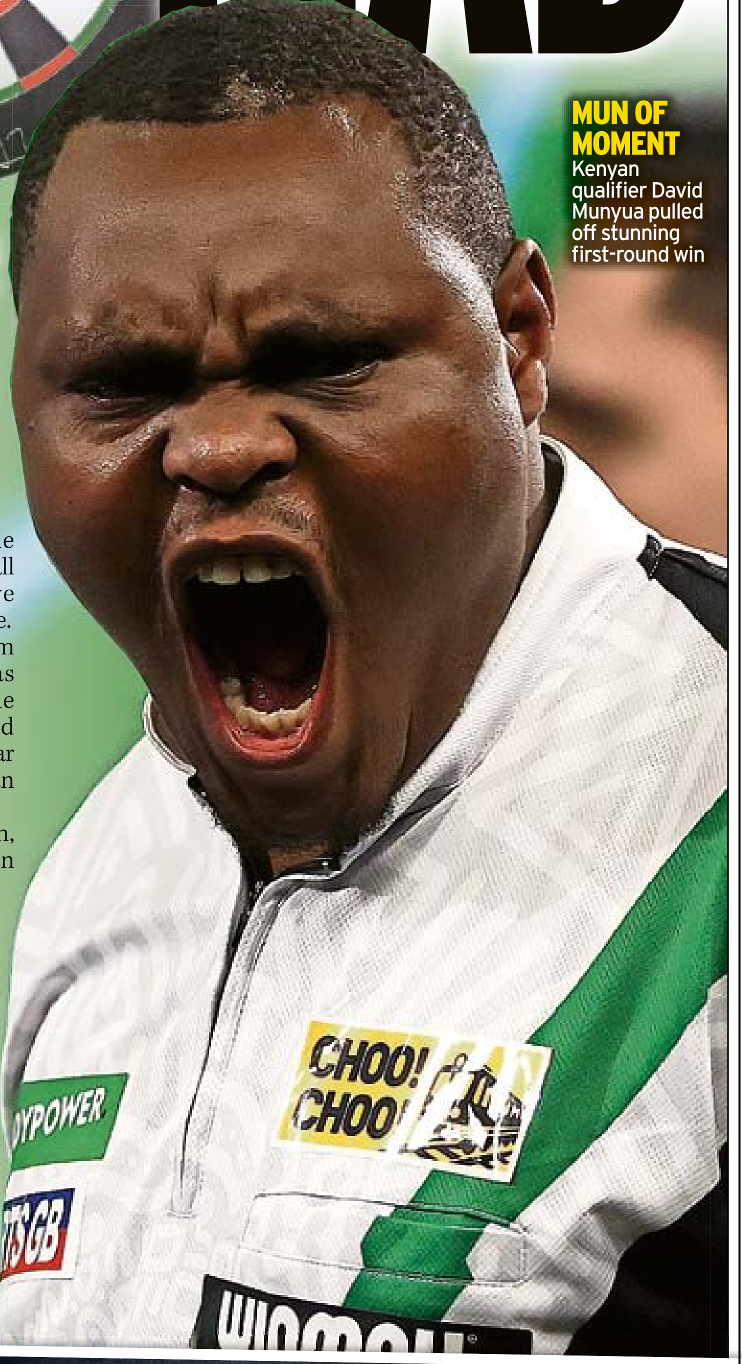
Allen added: "One of the great things is players from all those regional tours have actually won on this big stage.

"We had Adam Sevada from America, Sweden's Andreas Harrysson – who has come through the PDCNB tour and made the last 16 – Nitin Kumar won his first game, an Indian who plays on the Asian tour.

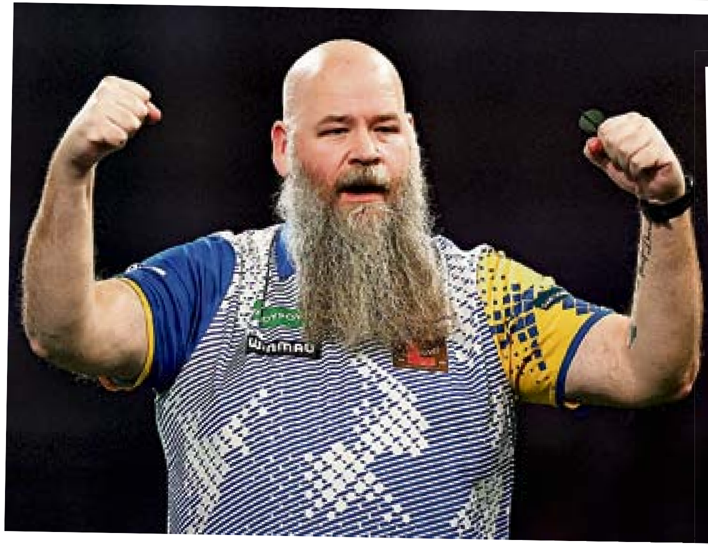
"Motomu Sakai, from Japan, won a game and is a big fan favourite.

"Joe Comito, from Australia, has had that progression where for the last few years he's been in the World Championship, now he has won a game here, and Jonny Tata from New Zealand won a game on his debut.

"We are really proud to see the progression of the affiliate tours. Now we've formalised our agreements in the last few months and across those tours there will be a minimum £3m investment from us over the next three years. It's almost the start of a new era for us"



MUN OF MOMENT
Kenyan qualifier David Munyua pulled off stunning first-round win



THE BIG WINNERS
Andreas Harrysson (far left), Motomu Sakai (left) and Nitin Kumar all celebrated victories at Ally Pally

SPORT IN BRIEF

BASKETBALL

NBA: Brooklyn Nets 96 Houston Rockets 120, Detroit Pistons 112 Miami Heat 118, Dallas Mavericks 108 Philadelphia 76ers 123, Sacramento Kings 106 Boston Celtics 120, LA Clippers 118 Utah Jazz 101.

TENNIS

ATP & WTA UNITED CUP (Perth Sydney Australia) **— Group A Spain v Argentina — Men's Singles:** S Baez (Arg) bt J Munar (Spa) 6-4 6-4 **Women's Singles:** S Sierra (Arg) bt J Bouzas Maneiro (Spa) 6-4 5-7 6-0 **Mixed Doubles:** M Carle & G Andreozzi (Arg) bt Y Cavalle-Reimers & I Cervantes (Spa) 7-6 (8-6) 6-2 *Argentina bt Spain 3-0*

Group E Greece v Japan — Men's Singles: S Tsitsipas (Gre) bt S Mochizuki (Jpn) 6-3 6-4 **Women's Singles:** M Sakkari (Gre) bt N Osaka (Jpn) 6-4 6-2 **Mixed Doubles:** M Sakkari & S Tsitsipas (Gre) bt N Hibino & Y Uchiyama (Jpn) 6-2 6-3 *Greece bt Japan 3-0.*

TODAY'S DIARY

(3pm unless stated)

Premier League: AFC Bournemouth v Arsenal (5.30) (Live on Sky Sports Main Event), Aston Villa v Nottingham Forest (12.30) (Live on Sky Sports Main Event), Brighton v Burnley, Wolverhampton v West Ham.

Enterprise National League: Aldershot v Solihull Moors, Altrincham v Morecambe, Boston Utd v Eastleigh, Carlisle v Wealdstone, Forest Green v FC Halifax, Rochdale v Brackley, Southend v Truro City, Tamworth v Gateshead, Woking v Hartlepool, Yeovil v Braintree Tn (5.30).

William Hill Scottish Premiership: Celtic v Rangers (12.30) (Live on Sky Sports Football), Dundee Utd v Dundee (Live on Sky Sports Football), Falkirk v Aberdeen, Hearts v Livingston, Kilmarnock v Hibernian, Motherwell v St Mirren.

William Hill Scottish Championship: Airdrieonians v Raith, Ayr v Queen's Park, Dunfermline v Ross County, Partick v Morton, St Johnstone v Arbroath.

William Hill Scottish League One: Cove Rangers v Montrose, Hamilton v East Fife, Inverness CT v Peterhead, Kelty Hearts v Alloa, Stenhousemuir v Queen of the South.

William Hill Scottish League Two: Clyde v Forfar, Elgin v East Kilbride, Spartans v Dumbarton, Stirling v Annan Athletic, Stranraer v Edinburgh City.

CRICKET

Fifth Test Match — Day 1 of 5: Australia v England (Sydney, 11.30pm).

DARTS

PDC Paddy Power World Darts Championship — Final (Alexandra Palace, London, 8pm).

RUGBY UNION

Gallagher Prem: Bath v Exeter (3.05), Northampton v Harlequins (5.30).

United Rugby Championship: Benetton Treviso v Edinburgh (5.30), Glasgow v Zebre (7.45), Leinster v Connacht (5.30), Sharks v Lions (1.30), Stormers v Blue Bulls (4pm).

TOMORROW'S DIARY

Premier League: Everton v Brentford, Fulham v Liverpool (Live on Sky Sports Main Event), Leeds v Man Utd (12.30) (Live on TNT Sports 1), Man City v Chelsea (5.30) (Live on Sky Sports Main Event), Newcastle v Crystal Palace (Live on Sky Sports Premier League), Tottenham v Sunderland.

Sky Bet Championship: Birmingham v Coventry (12pm) (Live on Sky Sports Football), Blackburn v Charlton, Bristol City v Preston North End, Derby v Wrexham, Hull v Watford, Middlesbrough v Southampton, Millwall v Swansea, Norwich v Stoke, Portsmouth v Ipswich, QPR v Sheffield Wednesday (12pm), Sheffield Utd v Oxford Utd (12pm).

Sky Bet League One: Blackpool v Bradford, Bolton v Northampton (12pm), Cardiff v Wigan, Doncaster v Luton, Huddersfield v Exeter, Lincoln City v Peterborough (12pm), Plymouth v Burton, Port Vale v Barnsley, Reading v Stockport Co, Rotherham v Mansfield, Stevenage v Leyton Orient, Wycombe v AFC Wimbledon.

Sky Bet League Two: Barnet v Crewe, Barrow v Bristol Rovers, Bromley v Oldham, Cambridge Utd v Grimsby, Cheltenham v Crawley (12pm), Colchester v Accrington, Harrogate Tn v Swindon, Milton Keynes Dons v Chesterfield (12pm), Newport Co v Tranmere, Notts County v Gillingham, Salford City v Shrewsbury, Walsall v Fleetwood.

RUGBY UNION

Gallagher Prem: Leicester v Saracens.

URNED IT Aussie skipper Steve Smith and Stokes

STOKES BACKING BAZBALL TO HIT BIGGER HEIGHTS

FROM BACK PAGE

men are contracted for another 18 months, which will culminate in the home Ashes summer of 2027.

With his unmatched influence in the dressing room and no obvious contenders to replace him, Stokes' position as captain appears to be on much firmer footing than McCullum's role as head coach.

But they have worked at close quarters for the past three-and-a-half years and Stokes is certain they are best placed to pick up the pieces from an Ashes flop.

Stokes said: "I can't see there being someone else who I could take this team [on with] from where we are now to even bigger heights.

"We're both pretty keen on carrying on doing what we are doing.

"We haven't won here in Australia since 2010. Ashes tours in the past haven't gone well.

"You look back at how things have gone over the past year and the results and consistency hasn't quite been there from the first two-and-a-half to three years that we were in charge.

"But when you have that time off between series like we do after this – from January to June – it's a long time for us to get things going again in the right direction.

"We've obviously got some things to go away and speak about to try and get the boys pushing even further forward than we managed to achieve since me and Brendon first took over the job."

England's spirits were lifted by their four-wicket in Melbourne, their first on Australian soil in 19 attempts. But the Australia coach Andrew McDonald (below) attempted to deflate things by suggesting the true Ashes contest was already over at 3-0.

Stokes was in no mood to agree, saying: "He sees it that way and we see it differently.

"I get it, they've won The Ashes. We're still representing our country, so there's still lots to play for.

"It doesn't take anything away from the satisfaction and the immense pride that we have as a group at winning that last game.

"And I think that we can take the emotions of what that felt like into this final game here at Sydney."

Stokes has admitted that the intensity of the trip has been draining for him as a skipper, particularly the attempt to shield himself and his players from the constant barrage of scrutiny following them throughout their stay Down Under.

"No doubt it's been tough. I can't sit and lie and say it's been a walk in the park," he added.

"We'd planned for it, and I've done a few tours here, but it's been even higher than any other tour I've been on.

"Social media, and media in general, has changed a lot and it is impossible to not see anything these days.

"I've got pretty thick skin towards it all but it's impossible not to see it. The only way to do it would be just throw your phone in the river – but I like games on my phone too much to do that."

ZAK'S BACK AT THE BEGINNING

Crawley comfy in Sydney after opportunity knock in 2022

ON SAFE GROUND Crawley with coach Brendon McCullum (left) at SCG

FROM **RORY DOLLARD** IN SYDNEY

AS Zak Crawley prepares for this final Test of the Ashes series, the Sydney Cricket Ground offers him a chance to reflect on an innings that lit a spark under his career four years ago.

The tourists have already surrendered the urn this time but, having won a two-day shoot-out in Melbourne, they are hoping to cut their losses by leaving with successive victories and a 3-2 scoreline.

At the SCG in 2022, an attacking 77, scored in just 100 balls with 13 fours, proved a significant calling card for Crawley in a tough trip for England's top order. He has never fallen out of favour since, despite mixed results.

"I remember that knock clearly. It was one of my favourite ever knocks, not in terms of the score I got but in the way I played," said Crawley, who has been England's leading run-scorer on this tour.

"I've spent a lot of time in Sydney in my life, played some grade cricket seasons out here, so I feel comfortable.

"I feel like I really enjoy playing my cricket in Sydney, so hopefully I can lean on that and create more memories."

Crawley may have been planning for an extended break at the end of the Ashes but instead found himself handed an ODI recall for the Sri Lanka tour that begins just a couple of weeks after the conclusion of this fifth Test, which starts tonight UK time.

And, two years on from his most recent white-ball appearance, it is a chance he is eager to embrace.

MUSCLE MEMORY Crawley on his way to 77 at the SCG on previous tour

He said: "It's a massive goal of mine, and always has been, to play across formats. So I'm extremely excited about the opportunity and I'll give it my best shot.

"I still feel young and fresh so it's all good for me. I'd play every day if we could so I've got no problem with that."

It was one of my favourites, not in terms of the score I got but in the way I played

England are expected to hand Matthew Potts his Ashes debut in this final duel with Australia – but the door has not closed on spinner Shoaib Bashir returning to the side. Potts and Bashir have both been named in a 12-man squad, with resources stretched by series-ending injuries to Mark Wood, Jofra Archer and Gus Atkinson. Durham seamer Potts is favourite to add to his 10 caps, having last featured in December 2024, and has a solid Test record of 36 wickets at 29.44.

The 27-year-old could take the new ball at the SCG, having opened the bowling routinely at Durham, in a move that would allow Brydon Carse to return to a more familiar first-change role.

Crawley said: "I've faced a bit of Pottsy and every time I face him he impresses me.

"He's got the heart of a lion, a lot of skill and if he gets the nod this week he thoroughly deserves it."

TIME TO DELIVER Potts is favourite to take Atkinson's place

But England have retained the option of calling on Bashir if conditions look likely to offer generous turn.

The 22-year-old has spent the past 18 months as the team's first-choice spinner but a combination of unhelpful surfaces, modest scores from the top seven and his own middling form in practice have seen him fall out of favour on this trip.

It would take an extreme change of heart for the decision to go his way, with just nine wickets falling to spin in the first four Tests and showers expected across the first two days.

BOURNEMOUTH v ARSENAL
Premier League: KO 5.30pm

Arteta calls on Gunners to start a New tradition

MIKEL RESOLVES TO CONVERT THIS TIME

BY **TOM CANTON**

MIKEL ARTETA insisted it is time for Arsenal to break their New Year's Day hoodoo by landing the club's first Premier League title in more than two decades.

Arsenal hold a four-point lead over Manchester City following an emphatic 4-1 win against Aston Villa, while Pep Guardiola's side were held to a goalless draw at Sunderland.

However, on the previous five occasions across the past 23 years where Arsenal have ended the calendar year on top of the table, they have failed to win the title – the most recent occasion being three seasons ago, when Arteta's players finished the campaign five points behind City.

Arsenal, who last won the league in 2004, go to Bournemouth this evening and manager Arteta insisted he was not aware of the grizzly statistic, but added: "Let's break it. That's what the players transmit every single day when they're with us, training, and in every match. You can see their desire. You can see the energy that they put in, and how much they want it.

"There are still five months to go. Let's take it day-by-day, enjoy that process of being where we are, and go for it."

Declan Rice remains a doubt for the Gunners and could join Riccardo Calafiori and Cristhian Mosquera in missing the South Coast clash.

Beating Villa 4-1 on Tuesday night without Rice received high praise and brought encouragement for the squad's depth. However, Arteta confirmed the swelling in the England midfielder's knee had not gone down.

Rice received a "bad kick" in the game against Brighton, but played on.

When asked whether he had regrets about keeping him on throughout the match, the Arsenal manager was quick to suggest that the damage he had suffered had come as a surprise despite knowing about the problem.

"No, no, no," he said. "He managed to do it. That's normal sometimes. You get a hit, and throughout the game, you are able with adrenaline, and because you are warm, you are able to sustain that. And then the body reacts, and it reacted probably more than we expected, unfortunately."

Many have called on Arteta to more effectively rotate his side with the size of squad available to him. However, he said: "At the end, we have to talk about performance, not rotation. We want performance, the highest performance every three days or throughout the game, that's what we have to look at.

"And in order to achieve that, what are the best players, in the best condition, with the best relationship, to fulfil that."

Arteta said that the injury situation had actually improved at the club in recent years, and reiterated that they are always monitoring what can be done to improve the situation.

He said: "First thing, what we can do better, and the second thing, that is the reality of the sport. But looking back in the last three seasons, we have less days of injuries than before."

FOLLOW THE LEAD
Arteta's men start 2026 four points clear

STRIKER EXIT YO-YOING

BOURNEMOUTH head coach Andoni Iraola says star man Antoine Semenyo will face Premier League leaders Arsenal today – despite talks over a transfer to Manchester City.

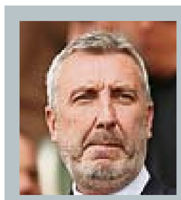
Second-placed City, four points behind the Gunners in the title race, have reportedly agreed to meet the £65million release clause for Semenyo (right).

Iraola insists nothing has been signed and hopes the Ghana forward, 25, may yet also feature against Tottenham on Wednesday.

"Yes, Antoine is going to play," Iraola said. "I hope he can be here for more time. But I don't know.

"There is nothing signed. There are conversations. I understand the noise around him, but Antoine is our player."

Semenyo, who is poised to make his 100th Premier League appearance, is the Cherries' top scorer with nine this season.



Ruben plans quiet window despite a push for top four

BY **TYRONE MARSHALL**

RUBEN AMORIM said there are no conversations ongoing with the Manchester United hierarchy about signing new players in the January transfer window.

United are sixth in the Premier League, only three points shy of Liverpool in fourth but head coach Amorim insisted that would not change the club's plans.

Amorim has previously suggested United would consider making a move in January if the conditions were right.

But he has now claimed there are no active conversations with director of football Jason Wilcox (left) or chief executive Omar Berrada over strengthening the squad this month.

"The transfer window is not going to change, we have no conversation to have any change in the squad," said Amorim.

FOOTBALL LATEST

● LIVERPOOL are closing in on a deal to sign centre-back Ifeanyi Ndukwe, 17, from Austria Vienna. The plan is for the 6ft 5in defender to join up with Arne Slot's side for their pre-season campaign in July. The Reds are also looking to tie midfielder Ryan Gravenberch down to an improved contract.

● **BOURNEMOUTH have signed former England, Tottenham and Celtic goalkeeper Fraser Forster on a six-month deal as back-up to Djordje Petrovic after an injury to Will Dennis.**

● TOTTENHAM have recalled winger Manor Solomon from Villarreal and sent him on loan to Fiorentina until the end of the season.

● **WEST HAM have called time on Niclas Fullkrug's disappointing spell at the club by confirming the German striker has joined AC Milan on loan.**

TRICKY SPELL
Slot's still looking for some 'magic'

Slot searching for the key to unlock Liverpool potential

Fulham v Liverpool
Tomorrow, 3pm

BY **PAUL GORST**

ARNE SLOT admitted he is not even thinking of reeling in leaders Arsenal or Manchester City right now while his Liverpool side lack the magic touch needed to overhaul their season.

The champions extended their unbeaten run in all competitions to eight games with a goalless draw at home to Leeds on New Year's Day.

But it was viewed as a missed opportunity to go five points clear of Chelsea in fifth and to within four of Aston Villa in third ahead of the trip to Fulham tomorrow.

While unbeaten since late November, Slot's side have struggled to piece together complete performances during this sequence and were unable to exert too much pressure on Leeds in the Reds' first 0-0 draw since December 2023.

"OK, that is not a nice thing to hear," Slot said of that statistic. "But I think it is clear and obvious that we hardly concede chances any more.

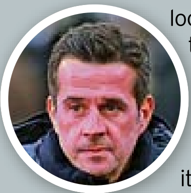
"It is also clear and obvious that we find it quite hard to generate enough chances for all the possession we have and that is not new for us this season.

"What the players try to do is they keep on trying. But sometimes you need a kind of magic to unlock a game or a set piece and if that then happens then all of a sudden everything looks much nicer."

Liverpool's problems from set pieces have played a significant part in their struggles. Slot admits the club are "looking at the situation" over their set-piece coach vacancy after Aaron Briggs was relieved of his duties this week, but did not discuss links to Feyenoord's Etienne Reijnen.

Liverpool conceded their 12th set-piece goal of the campaign in the 2-1 home win against Wolves last week. The Reds have scored just three goals from dead-ball situations.

But Slot accepted even without their set-piece problems, Liverpool do not deserve to be any higher than fourth.



"Yes [fourth is fair] although the margins are small," he said. "But from open play, from where we are, when I look at Arsenal, at City and I look at us, it's fair that we are not above them.

"Every single game we play it's hard work, it's two teams quite close to each other, we are mainly the team that is probably better but not enough."

Fulham head coach Marco Silva (above) knows small margins can make a big difference as his side head into the second half of the season with the visit of Liverpool.

The Cottagers saw their hopes of a fourth straight Premier League win halted after battling back to draw 1-1 at Crystal Palace on Thursday.

Silva said: "The difference between winning or if you don't is so small.

"Even with the goal we conceded we were able to create chances in the second half – and if we had been more ruthless, then in the end we should have won that game, so it makes a big difference."

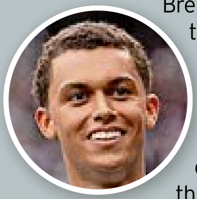
It's Crystal clear that Johnson cannot wait to start life at Palace

Newcastle v Crystal Palace
Tomorrow, 3pm

BY **NEIL McLEMAN**

BRENNAN JOHNSON declared he is "super excited" to become Crystal Palace's record £35million transfer – and is set to make his Eagles debut at Newcastle tomorrow.

And the FA Cup holders could further strengthen their injury-hit squad by signing striker Sidiki Cherif from French side Angers.



Former Nottingham Forest forward Johnson scored 18 goals for Tottenham last season, including the winner against Manchester United in the Europa League final.

But the Wales star (above), 24, has now joined injury-hit Palace who are competing in the Conference League. He signed a four-and-a-half year deal and will wear the No.11. "I'm really excited and I'm really happy," said Johnson. "Crystal Palace are such a great club, one that I've always admired.

"It's a great time for me to be here and join the journey that this club is on – I'm super excited."

Manager Oliver Glasner, who has criticised the south London club for acting too slowly in previous windows, said: "I'm really delighted that Brennan has joined the club. He arrives very early in the window, so credit to the club for making this happen so quickly.

"Brennan will give us options in our attacking play with his pace and goalscoring ability and with all the upcoming games he will be a valuable addition."

Eddie Howe has hit back that he lacks a Plan B at Newcastle but said: "A Plan B? That is always a difficult one. If you have too many Plan Bs that means your Plan A is flawed. Your players are thinking, 'What next?'"

Moyes sees Europe on horizon for Blues

Everton v Brentford
Tomorrow, 3pm

BY **JOE THOMAS**

DAVID MOYES believes Everton could be back in Europe as early as next season.

The Blues start 2026 two points off the top five – despite a selection headache caused by injuries and players taking part in the Africa Cup of Nations.

The Scot (right), who won the Europa Conference League with West Ham, believes more work is needed to build a team fit for a European push.

But he believes qualification cannot come too soon for the club.

Ahead of tomorrow's visit of Brentford, who are a point below Everton, Moyes said: "Are we ready to cope? I could probably say, no. But I got West Ham there and I didn't think we were ready either. We had to find a way of getting through it and we did in the main.

"We didn't win it the first year, we were semi-finalists, but that's the plan – if we can do it."

Jarrad Branthwaite, Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall, Seamus Coleman, Carlos Alcaraz and Michael Keane are all injured.

Iliman Ndiaye and Idrissa Gueye are away with Senegal. Only Keane might return tomorrow, though teenage midfielder Harrison Armstrong has been recalled from a loan spell at Preston NE.

Brentford head coach Keith Andrews is confident he won't lose any leading players in the transfer window.

He said: "Definitely retaining will be number one on the agenda for our key players, and that should be fine. January is a tricky month. We will make sensible decisions."

CALUM'S

THRUST INTO THE SPOTLIGHT
Chelsea's caretaker boss faces the media and (right) talking to keeper Robert Sanchez in training

GUARDIOLA TAKES AIM AT STAMFORD

OLD PALS' ACT
Guardiola and Maresca worked together at City

FROM BACK PAGE

speak up for the qualities of his former colleague.

The change at Chelsea will make it more difficult for him to prepare for the game – but the City boss will not have to contend with a coach who masterminded victories over Paris Saint-Germain, Barcelona and Liverpool in recent months.

Instead, in the opposite dugout will be Chelsea's Under-21s coach Calum McFarlane, taking charge of his first match at senior level.

Guardiola did not care for more questions about his own future, given claims City had spoken to Maresca before his Chelsea exit, but is grateful for the support he has received from his bosses after a particularly difficult patch last season.

He said: "Chelsea have always been dangerous and the Premier League is dangerous every game.

"All I can say is that from my point of view, Chelsea have lost an incredible manager and an incredible person.

"It's a decision from the Chelsea hierarchy so I've nothing to say. How lucky I am in the club where I am.

NAME UP IN LIGHTS

McFarlane gets his chance to shine as Blues' caretaker boss

MAN CITY v CHELSEA
Premier League: Tomorrow, 5.30pm, Sky Sports

BY **BOBBY VINCENT**

CALUM McFARLANE was on the way to a light s how in Windsor with his family when he found out about getting the Chelsea caretaker manager job.

Now he will be hoping to shine bright against Manchester City tomorrow – even if he admits that he won't be trying to "reinvent the wheel".

McFarlane, the Blues' Under-21s head coach, was informed he and a handful of his backroom staff would be preparing the West Londoners for the daunting challenge of Pep Guardiola's City at the Etihad following Enzo Maresca's departure on New Year's Day.

Liam Rosenior has emerged as the big favourite to succeed Maresca as Chelsea's permanent head coach, while McFarlane has just been briefed to focus on tomorrow's trip to Manchester for the time being.

McFarlane arrived at Chelsea to work with the club's academy in the summer from Southampton.

He had previously worked in Manchester City's youth ranks and this will be his first match at senior level. And he was enjoying his day off with his family when he got the call from one of the club's sporting directors.

"I was actually on the way to a Windsor light show with my family," said McFarlane.

"I got a call and it just basically said, 'When can you get in?' I said, 'I can be in in an hour.' So the missus wasn't very happy about that.

"But I shot across and they basically explained what happened and said, 'You're going to be preparing to play Manchester City on Sunday. We fully support you and trust you and good luck'."

While the rest of his family still attended the light show, it was back to work for McFarlane and a select few members of staff, but in a new capacity.

The Chelsea interim boss took his first training session with the senior squad yesterday morning.

It was the squad's first session back after being given two days off following their 2-2 draw with Bournemouth on Tuesday in what turned out to be Maresca's final match.

To avoid leaving players in the dark about Chelsea's short-term plans, McFarlane, along with his staff and the sporting directors, Paul Winstanley and Laurence Stewart, held a meeting yesterday morning.

"We had a meeting with the sporting directors and the players just to explain the situation and introduce the staff and how the next couple of days might look and feel," added McFarlane.

"Really informal, nothing major, just a quick update, which most of them would have been aware of already."

McFarlane described his playing style as similar to Maresca's and will not be looking to make drastic changes.

"There has been some really good work done previously," he said.

"So it will be about introducing some of your own ideas and some of your own concepts on how you think you can be successful in the game.

"It's not trying to reinvent the wheel, so to speak."

WELCOME TO THE BIG TIME Calum McFarlane gets ready for his stint in the Chelsea hot seat

BRIDGE BOSSES OVER MARESCA AXE

My club is extraordinary. I have a contract. I say a thousand million times, I know you're bored of me, I've been here for 10 years and I promise you I will leave one day.

"But I have a contract, I'm happy, I want to fight with my team, the hierarchy respect me - they proved last season when we didn't win one game in three months and they supported me."

Rosenior yesterday refused to rule himself out of becoming Chelsea's new head coach.

The 41-year-old is in charge at Strasbourg, who are owned by BlueCo - the consortium that runs Chelsea - and has admirers within the hierarchy.

Francesco Farioli, the Porto manager, is also on the shortlist. Blues legend Cesc Fabregas and former Brighton boss Roberto De Zerbi - now at Marseille - were also linked, though sources have confirmed that neither are currenty under consideration.

Strasbourg boss Rosenior held his press conference yesterday ahead of his side's Ligue 1 clash with Nice tonight.

While insisting his focus remains on his team, he refused to guarantee how long he would be at Stade de la Meinau. "In life, there are zero guarantees. You never know what tomorrow will bring," he said.

"I'm just doing my job. There's already been speculation. I don't want to guarantee how long I'll be here, but I enjoy myself here every day. I love this club, but I can't guarantee anything."

IN THE WINGS Liam Rosenior is being widely tipped to take over at Chelsea

12X GUIDE

(3pm unless stated)

TODAY

Premier League
1 Aston Villa v Nottm Forest (12.30) ..
(Live on Sky Sports Main Event)
2 AFC Bournemouth v Arsenal (5.30)..
(Live on Sky Sports Main Event)
3 Brighton v Burnley..........................
10 Wolves v West Ham........................

William Hill Scottish Premiership
44 Celtic v Rangers (12.30)................
(Live on Sky Sports Football)
45 Dundee Utd v Dundee ....
(Live on Sky Sports Football)
46 Falkirk v Aberdeen..........................
47 Hearts v Livingston ....
48 Kilmarnock v Hibernian..................
49 Motherwell v St Mirren...................

William Hill Scottish Championship
Airdrieonians v Raith ....
Ayr v Queen's Park ....
Dunfermline v Ross County............
Partick v Morton ....
St Johnstone v Arbroath ....

William Hill Scottish League One
Cove Rangers v Montrose..............
Hamilton v East Fife.......................
Inverness CT v Peterhead ....
Kelty Hearts v Alloa........................
Stenhousemuir v Queen of South....

William Hill Scottish League Two
Clyde v Forfar.................................
Elgin v East Kilbride ....
Spartans v Dumbarton ....
Stirling v Annan Athletic..................
Stranraer v Edinburgh City..............

Enterprise National League
Aldershot v Solihull Moors ....
Altrincham v Morecambe ....
Boreham Wood v York....................
Boston Utd v Eastleigh ....
Carlisle v Wealdstone.....................
Forest Green v FC Halifax ....
Rochdale v Brackley ....
Scunthorpe v Sutton.......................
Southend v Truro City ....
Tamworth v Gateshead ....
Woking v Hartlepool ....
Yeovil v Braintree Tn (5.30).............

Enterprise National League—North: Alfreton Tn v Hereford FC, Bedford Tn v AFC Fylde, Buxton v South Shields, Chester FC v Worksop Tn, Chorley v Leamington, Darlington v Macclesfield FC, Kidderminster v Curzon Ashton, Merthyr Tn v King's Lynn Tn, Peterborough Sports v Marine, Radcliffe v Oxford City, Southport v Scarborough Athletic, Spennymoor Tn v AFC Telford. **South:** AFC Totton v Enfield Tn, Bath C v Ebbsfleet United, Chelmsford v Maidstone Utd, Dover v Torquay, Hampton & Richmond v Chesham Utd, Hemel Hempstead v Dag & Red, Hornchurch v Salisbury FC, Horsham v Maidenhead, Slough v Eastbourne Borough, Tonbridge Angels v Dorking Wanderers, Weston-S-Mare v Farnborough, Worthing v Chippenham.

TOMORROW

Premier League
4 Everton v Brentford ....
5 Fulham v Liverpool ....
(Live on Sky Sports Main Event)
6 Leeds v Manchester Utd (12.30).....
(Live on TNT Sports 1)
7 Manchester City v Chelsea (5.30) ...
8 Newcastle v Crystal Palace ....
(Live on Sky Sports Premier League)
9 Tottenham Hotspur v Sunderland.....
(Live on Sky Sports Football)

Sky Bet Championship
11 Birmingham v Coventry (12noon).....
(Live on Sky Sports Football)
12 Blackburn v Charlton ....
13 Bristol City v Preston......................
14 Derby v Wrexham ....
15 Hull v Watford ....
Leicester v West Brom............**MON**
16 Middlesbrough v Southampton........
17 Millwall v Swansea.........................
18 Norwich v Stoke ....
19 Portsmouth v Ipswich ....
20 QPR v Sheff Wed (12noon) ....
21 Sheff Utd v Oxford Utd (12noon) .....

Sky Bet League One
22 Blackpool v Bradford City...............
23 Bolton v Northampton (12noon) ......
24 Cardiff v Wigan..............................
25 Doncaster v Luton.........................
26 Huddersfield v Exeter ....
27 Lincoln v Peterborough (12noon).....
28 Plymouth v Burton.........................
29 Port Vale v Barnsley ....
30 Reading v Stockport County...........
31 Rotherham v Mansfield..................
32 Stevenage v Leyton Orient ....
33 Wycombe v AFC Wimbledon ....

Sky Bet League Two
34 Barnet v Crewe ....
35 Barrow v Bristol Rovers ....
36 Bromley v Oldham ....
37 Cambridge Utd v Grimsby...............
38 Cheltenham v Crawley Tn (12noon)..
39 Colchester v Accrington Stanley.......
40 Harrogate Tn v Swindon.................
41 MK Dons v Chesterfield (12noon)....
42 Newport Co v Tranmere ....
43 Notts County v Gillingham..............
Salford City v Shrewsbury ....
Walsall v Fleetwood Tn ....

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TIME TO STAND UP
Stokes backs McCullum to reach "bigger heights"

Stokes has 'no doubt' Baz still right for job

FROM **RORY DOLLARD** IN SYDNEY

BEN STOKES believes splitting up his 'Bazball' double act with Brendon McCullum would be the wrong response to England's Ashes flop – and provide no solution either.

England handed the urn to Australia with three defeats in 11 chastening days before ending their 15-year winless streak Down Under with victory in the Boxing Day Test.

One more chance awaits when they line up for the series finale in Sydney, with the fate of the regime's key decision-makers still under the microscope.

Stokes said: "There is no doubt in my mind that me and Brendon are the right people to carry on doing it for the near future." Both

TURN TO P76, COLUMN 1

LOYALTY BONUS
Guardiola was backed by City through tough spell last term

YOU JUST BLUE IT

Guardiola tells Chelsea they have lost 'incredible manager' Maresca

BY **SIMON BAJKOWSKI**

PEP GUARDIOLA has told Chelsea they have lost an "incredible manager" after Enzo Maresca left Stamford Bridge.

The former Manchester City assistant (left) will not be in the away dugout at the Etihad tomorrow after a messy and abrupt ending at the Blues, with Strasbourg chief Liam Rosenior waiting in the wings to take over.

Guardiola usually refuses to discuss managerial exits but did

TURN TO PAGE 78, COLUMN 3

Arteta's out to end New Year curse

EYES ON THE PRIZE – P77

DAILY EXPRESS
Fever Pitch
YOUR FOOTBALL WEEKEND STARTS HERE
WELCOME TO ELL

FREE INSIDE

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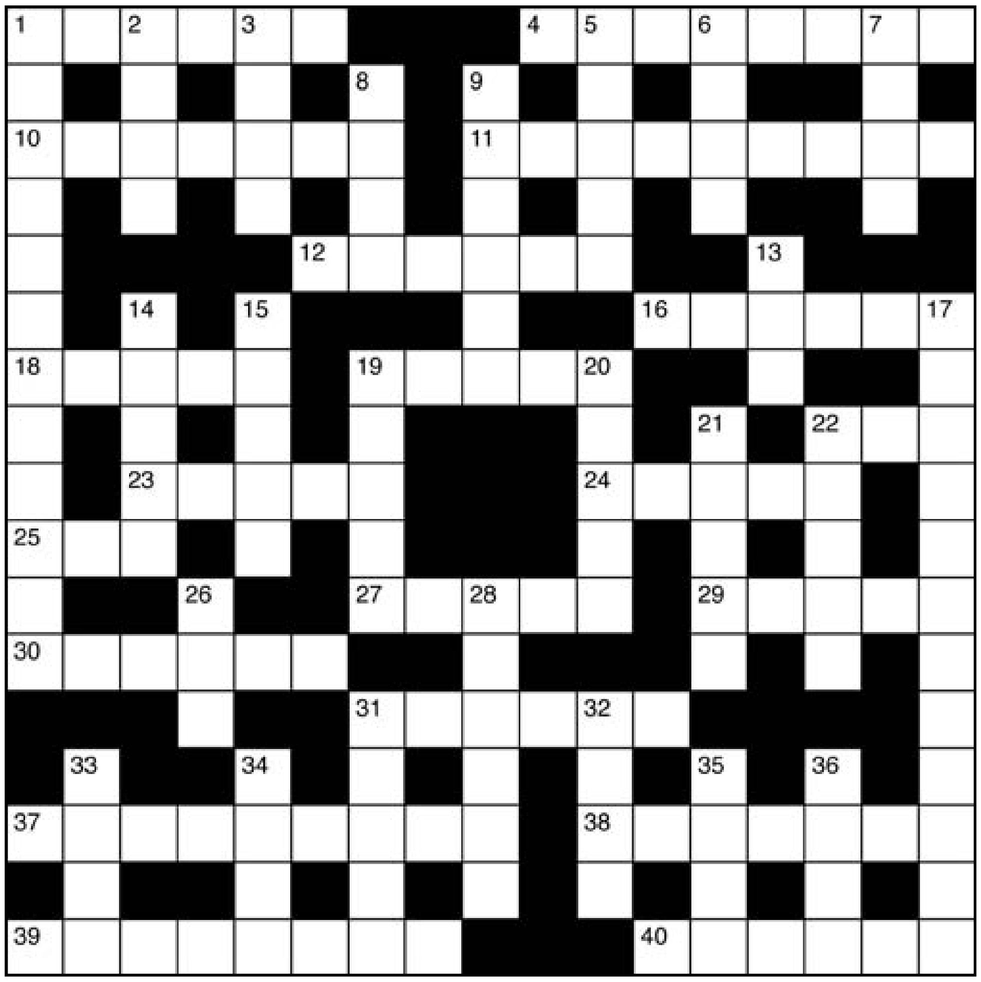
DAILY EXPRESS
Puzzles EXTRA

Welcome to your brilliant Saturday Express eight-page puzzles pullout. We've got plenty here to keep you busy, from your favourite crosswords to brain-teasing sudokus and more. Enjoy!

ENTERTAINMENT CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Comedian and actor, _ Clary (6)
4 Outspoken US chat show hostess, Rosie _'_ (8)
10 Ardal _'_, Irish funny man who appeared in Father Ted (1'6)
11 Regular wine expert on Saturday Kitchen (4,5)
12 _ Lawson, 60s model who got her nickname because of her skinny shape (6)
16 Footballer Paul Gascoigne's model stepdaughter (6)
18 American soul singer, Alexander _ _ (1'4)
19 Last name of father and son actors Martin and Charlie (5)
22 Straight-faced English comedian Jack _ (3)
23 World-leading fashion designer, Oscar de la _ (5)
24 Footballers' Wives actress _ Rouass (5)
25 _ Nicodemou, plays Leah Patterson-Baker in Home and Away (3)
27 Nick _, Brit famed for appearing in the Levi's ad in the 1980s (5)
29 Girls Aloud singer who hails from Northern Ireland, Nadine _ (5)
30 All Her Fault actress, _ Fanning (6)
31 CSI: Miami actor, David _ (6)
37 See 2 Down
38 Former Deal Or No Deal host, Noel _ (7)
39 Broadcaster who was born in Trinidad, Sir Trevor _ (8)
40 _ Lewis, Brit who appeared in Homeland and The Radleys (6)

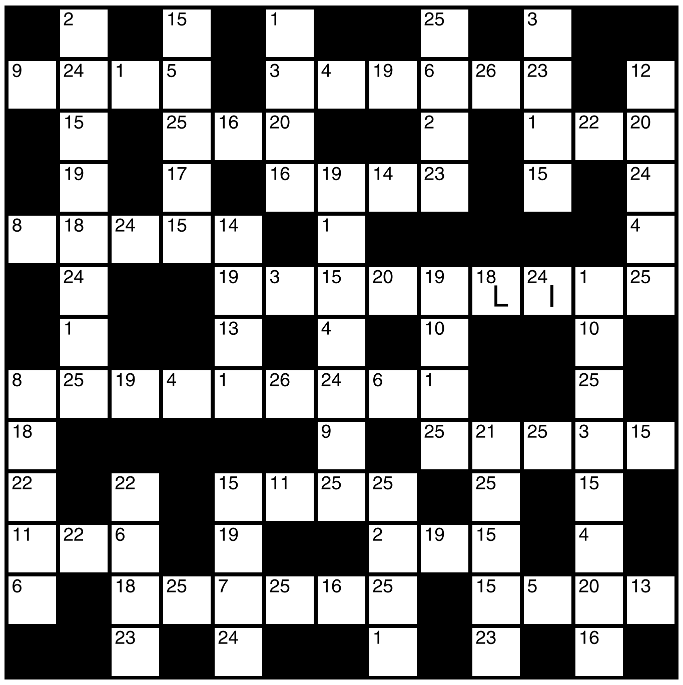
DOWN

1 Pianist who has presented Later since 1992 (5,7)
2 & 37 Miley Cyrus's The Last Song co-star former husband (4,9)
3 Football pundit and former footballer, _ McCoist (4)
5 Olympic medal-winning diver, Tom _ (5)
6 Foundations singer Kate _ (4)
7 Jared _, Tron: Ares actor (4)
8 Former Channel Four news journalist Jon _ (4)
9 McFly bassist, _ Poynter (6)
13 Action movie hero, Jean Claude _ Damme (3)
14 Comedienne who wrote Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee, _ Syal (5)
15 Singer-songwriter whose debut album was Back To Bedlam, James _ (5)
17 Knighted Scot who retired as manager of Manchester Utd in 2013 (4,8)
19 Million Dollar Baby Oscar-winner, Hilary _ (5)
20 Regular Loose Women panelist, Coleen _ (5)
21 Actress who appeared in American Beauty, Thora _ (5)
22 _ Hannah, played a mermaid in Splash (5)
26 _ Calzaghe, Welsh professional boxer who retired undefeated (3)
28 Actor Cillian or Eddie? (6)
31 TV personality, _ Vorderman (5)
32 Football manager who passed away in 2024, _-Goran Eriksson (4)
33 Solo artist also known as Sporty Spice (3,1)
34 _ McGregor, Scottish actor (4)
35 Down Cemetery Road actress, _ Thompson (4)
36 TV host and producer, _ Peters (4)

CODEWORD

The number in each square corresponds to a letter. Work out the words in the grid using the letters provided. Fill in these known letters first, then use skill and judgement to work out the others.

1



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14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
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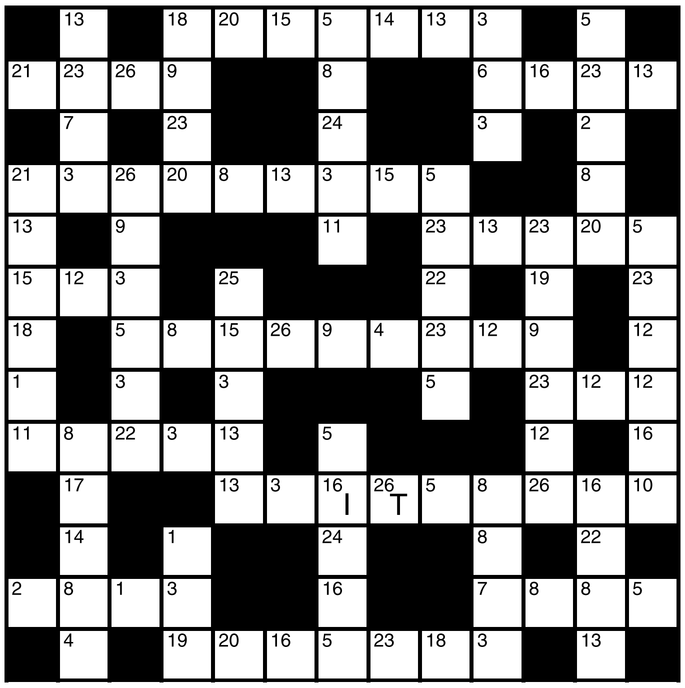
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

2



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A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

SAMURAI SUDOKU

Normal sudoku rules apply for all five 9x9 sudokus, but the 9x9 inner sudoku shares four of its 3x3 boxes with those of the outside sudokus.

1		9				5		6				7		9					8	
			6	9	1											6		7		9
6					8		4					2		4		5	7		3	
	7			1		4		5				4	9		7			3		
	1		7		4			2					1					2	7	
	6	4		2		1						8	2				5			
3			9		7				7	4								8		7
		5							5						1	4	3			
2			1	4					1						6		8	9		3
						1	9	2												
						3								9						
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4		3	8		9						4					8	4			2
			6	3	2						2							9		
2		9								1	7				9		3			6
			9				5	8						7		2		3	5	
	2	5					1					4			3		5		2	
		6			1		7	9				3		5		9			1	
	5		3	1		6		2					4		2					1
6		7		5											8	4	1			
	3					7		5				1		2				4		7

EASY SUDOKU 1

		6			4			
	2	9	1		8	6		5
8				6			1	3
4		1			3		6	
		3	5		7	2		4
	9		8	4		1		
1	4			8				
2			4		1	8	5	
		8	3					1

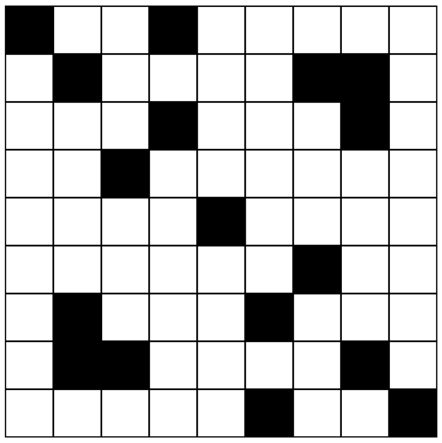
HARD SUDOKU 1

		4				6		8
2				5				
	6	5			3		1	
4	2							
		6	8		5	9		
							8	7
	1		2			5	4	
				9				3
5		7				2		

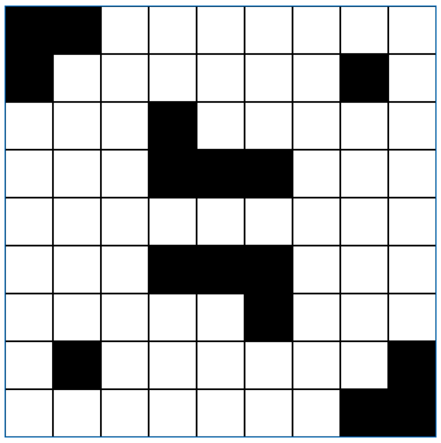
NUMBERFIT 1

NUMBERFIT 2

Use logic to fit the listed numbers below into the corresponding grid.



2 digits: 14 17 41 71
3 digits: 112 113 122 221 223 331 332 442
4 digits: 1342 1431 2443 2453 3344 3421 3443 4344
5 digits: 33242 32442
6 digits: 114133 114311 143224 232441
8 digits: 21131423 21134123



2 digits: 45 53
3 digits: 148 214 324 412 423 541 575 649 843 973
5 digits: 23576 67532
6 digits: 674647 683129 745476 821496
7 digits: 2544235 3124452 5126643 5663213
9 digits: 268559852 285889582 295885992

ALPHADOKU 1

A 9 x 9 sudoku with the letters R to Z.

Y					V	Z		W
							Y	
	T	U						
	V			Y		W	S	X
	X				S			
								R
			Z		U			
		S	W	R			V	U
	U	T		V				Y

EASY SUDOKU 2

		4	2			5	1	
			3	4	1			6
8		1				4		3
4	8			3			5	
	1		9		7		4	
	9			8			3	1
5		8				3		4
1			8	7	3			
	2	3			5	1		

HARD SUDOKU 2

1	2					3		
7				1		4		
				2			6	5
			7		2			
	8	7				2	9	
			9		8			
5	4			7				
		8		3				4
		9					5	7

ALPHADOKU 2

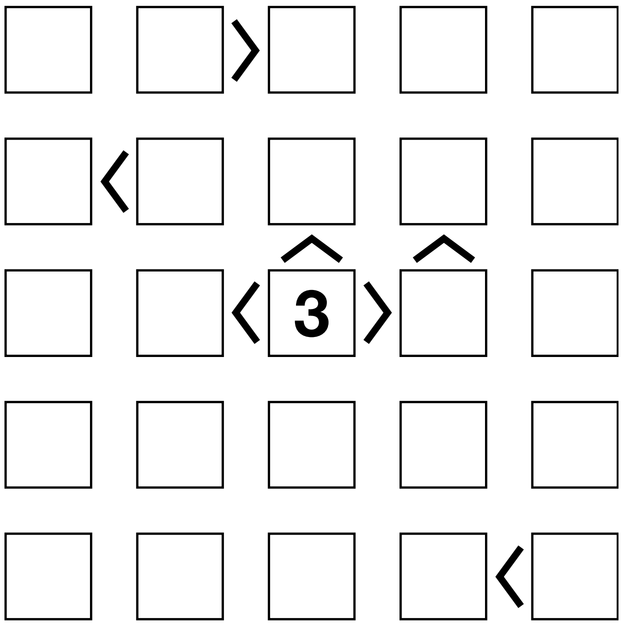
A 9 x 9 sudoku with the letters R to Z.

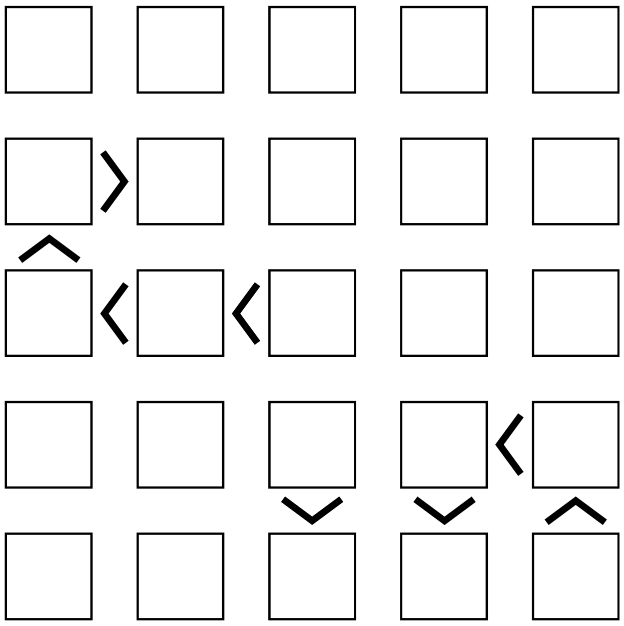
				V			Y	
T		S					W	V
	Z		W					
	U						S	
Y					R	V	T	
								W
V			R	T	Y			
		R	U	W				X

FUTOSHIKI 1

FUTOSHIKI 2

Insert the numbers one to five in each row and each column, making sure that no number is repeated. The only symbols to guide you are the "greater than" (>) and "less than" (<) signs.

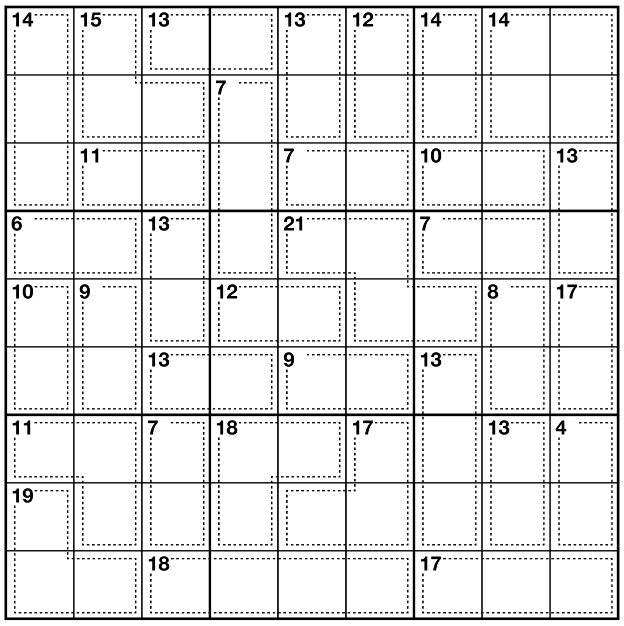




KILLER SUDOKU 1

KILLER SUDOKU 2

Each row and column hold the numbers 1 to 9 and the numbers in the cages must add to the given total. No number can be repeated in a cage.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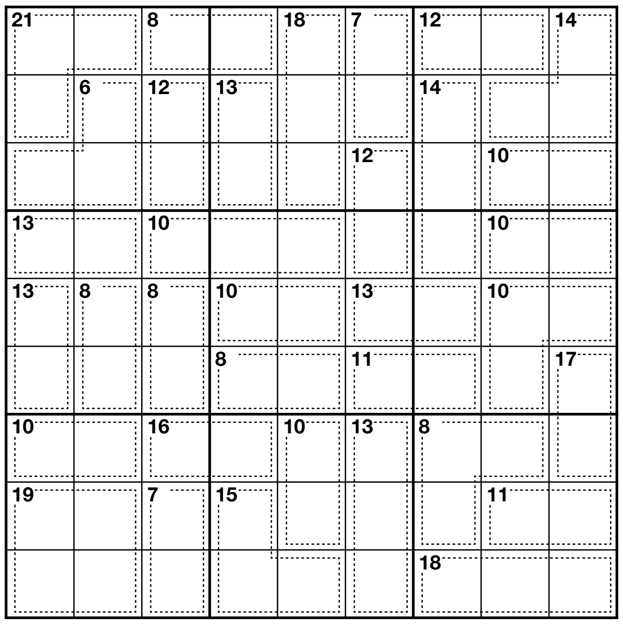
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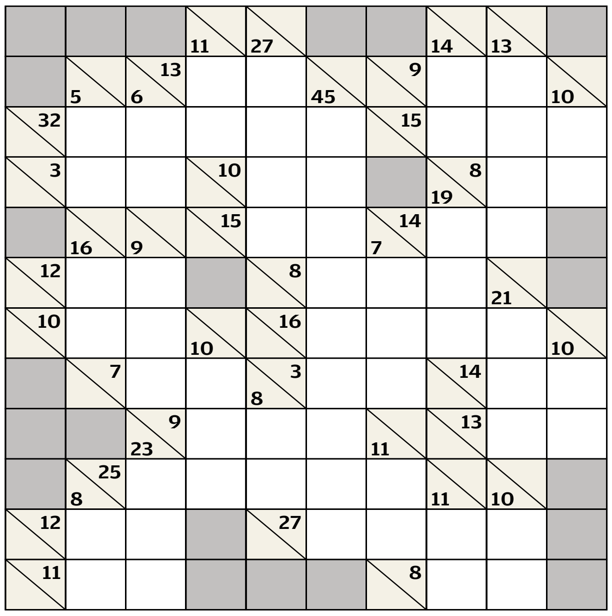
KAKURO 1

KAKURO 2

Fill in each series of blank squares using the numbers 1 to 9. Each series – across and down – must add up to the number in the shaded box at the beginning or top of the series. A number may be repeated in each line but not in a series.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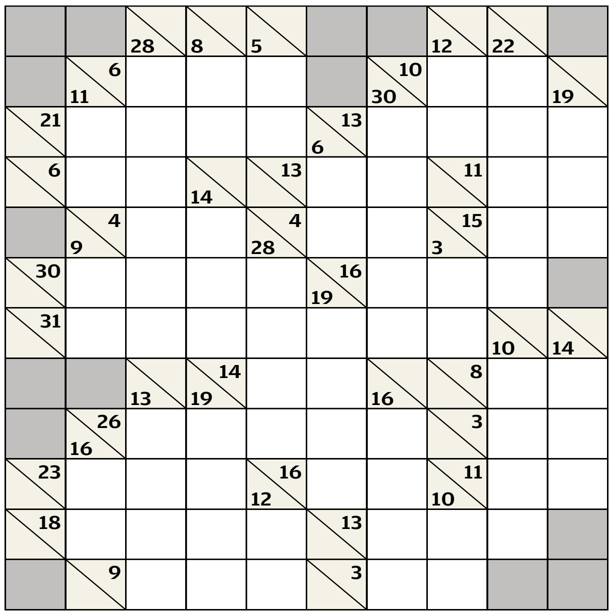
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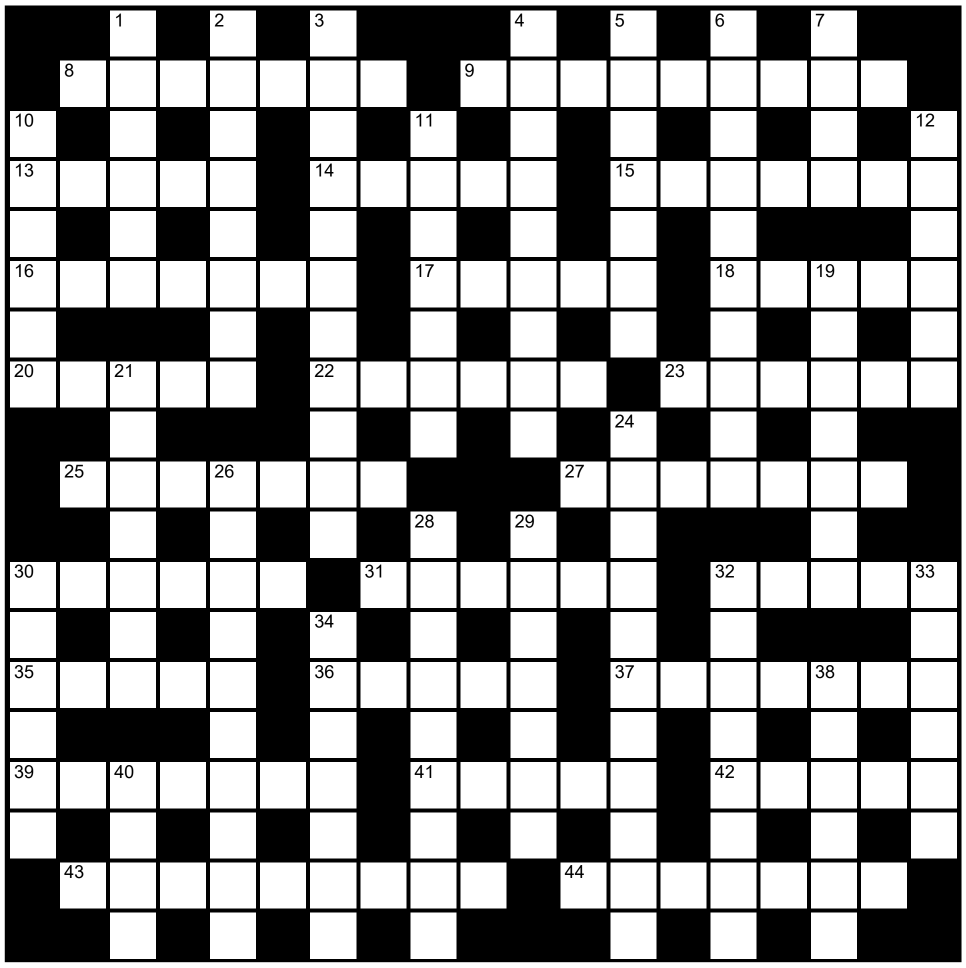
BIG CROSSWORD 1



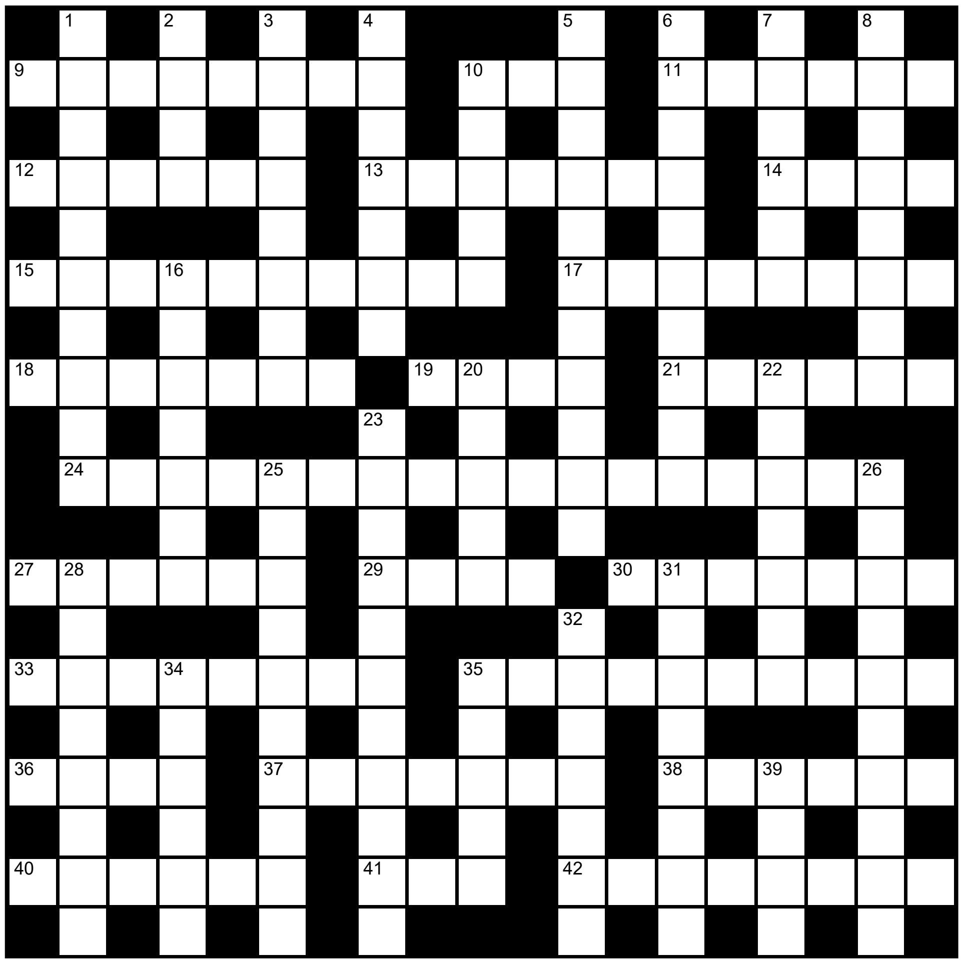
ACROSS

8 Hand over (7)
9 Moscow inhabitant (9)
13 Join (5)
14 Lift (5)
15 Hard-wearing (7)
16 Cowardly (7)
17 Lamp (5)
18 Intone (5)
20 Roof's edge (5)
22 Begrudge (6)
23 Scrap (6)
25 Weapon store (7)
27 Overtaking (7)
30 Spasm (6)
31 Liquid container (6)
32 Mexican food (5)
35 Scent (5)
36 Sign up (5)
37 Expressionless (7)
39 Gossiped (7)
41 Pitchers (5)
42 Conjure up (5)
43 Abundant (9)
44 Ate heartily (7)

DOWN

1 Describe (6)
2 Eternal (8)
3 Earthly (11)
4 Vegetable (9)
5 Sharpness (7)
6 Greedy (10)
7 Counterfoil (4)
10 Mess up (6)
11 Random (7)
12 Hire charge (6)
19 Poison (7)
21 Fear of heights (7)
24 Dealer in sewing articles (11)
26 Bewitching (10)
28 Polite (9)
29 Postponed (7)
30 Hypnotic state (6)
32 Cross (8)
33 Vocalist (6)
34 Thin shoot (7)
38 Bogus (6)
40 Competent (4)

BIG CROSSWORD 2



ACROSS

9 Entire (8)
10 Owing (3)
11 Number (6)
12 Batsman's posture (6)
13 Hand over (7)
14 Wet weather (4)
15 Burn to ashes (10)
17 Guardian of people's rights (8)
18 Swagger (7)
19 Indian dress (4)
21 Withstand (6)
24 Achieve success (5,4,3,5)
27 Tension (6)
29 Surfaced walk (4)
30 Greek restaurant (7)
33 False teeth (8)
35 Magnanimity (10)
36 Woodwind instrument (4)
37 Distinguished (7)
38 Confirm (6)
40 Not often (6)
41 Peculiar (3)
42 Mocking (8)

DOWN

1 Wrestling hold (6,4)
2 Unlock (4)
3 Clergyman (8)
4 Expressionless (7)
5 Boxing division (11)
6 Object of infatuation (5-5)
7 Quest (6)
8 Risky (8)
10 Dig deep (5)
16 A bill (7)
20 Turn aside (5)
22 Shampoo pouches (7)
23 Essay (11)
25 Art of good eating (10)
26 Normal office hours (4,2,4)
28 Quivers (8)
31 Ant bear (8)
32 Not prepared (7)
34 Fashions (6)
35 Putrefy (2,3)
39 Stratagem (4)

TWO-SPEED CROSSWORD

This two-speed crossword has two sets of clues, but just one grid

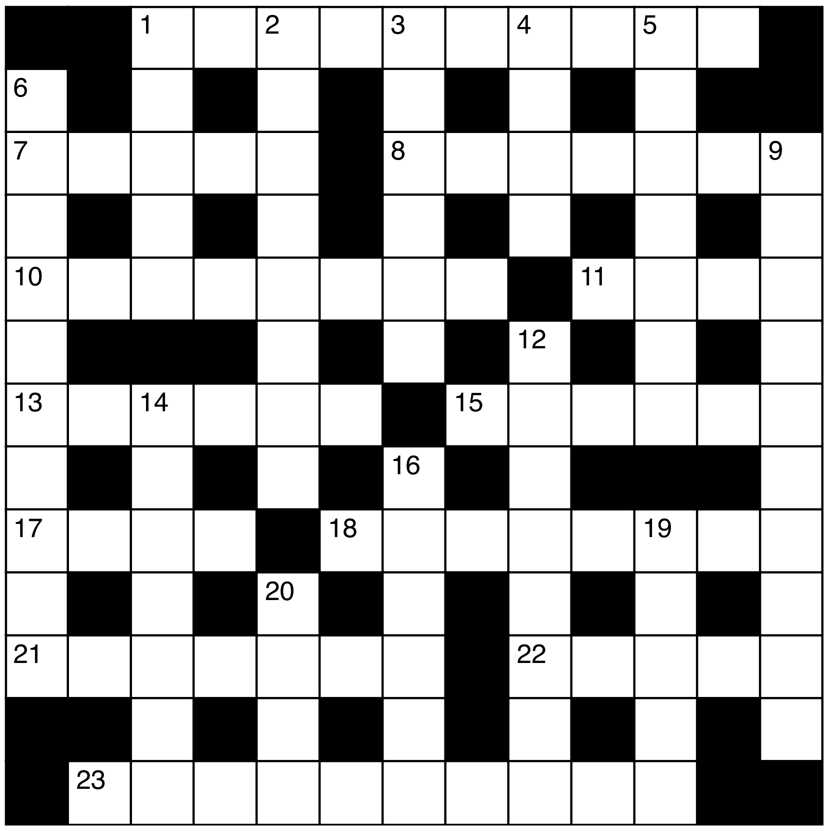
CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

1. Entitled 'The One That Got Away'? (5,5)
7. Carry off gun (5)
8. Set bulb round harvest remains (7)
10. A tiny peg in the Middle East (8)
11. Churlish, but was sorry, we hear (4)
13. Some other balanced book of useful plants (6)
15. Keeper of resort during hostilities (6)
17. Runs into sheep (4)
18. Renounce the pretension of 501 (8)
21. Intrepid damsel finds drug out East (7)
22. 50 move little by little to the shelf (5)
23. Unclaimed mail left by deceased landlord apparently (4,6)

DOWN

1. A number of staff, if typical (5)
2. Let scrap become ghostly (8)
3. Men say he hasn't a mind of his own (3-3)
4. Shut like this (4)
5. Spring back despite being tied up again (7)
6. Is there no service charge here? (4,6)
9. It's whole when halved and has still less feeling (4,6)
12. One of Arthur's knights could have been tall once (8)
14. Compunction about dots and dashes (7)
16. No tricks when niggard takes on egghead (6)
19. Snake presumably can put two and two together (5)
20. Benevolent type (4)



QUICK CLUES

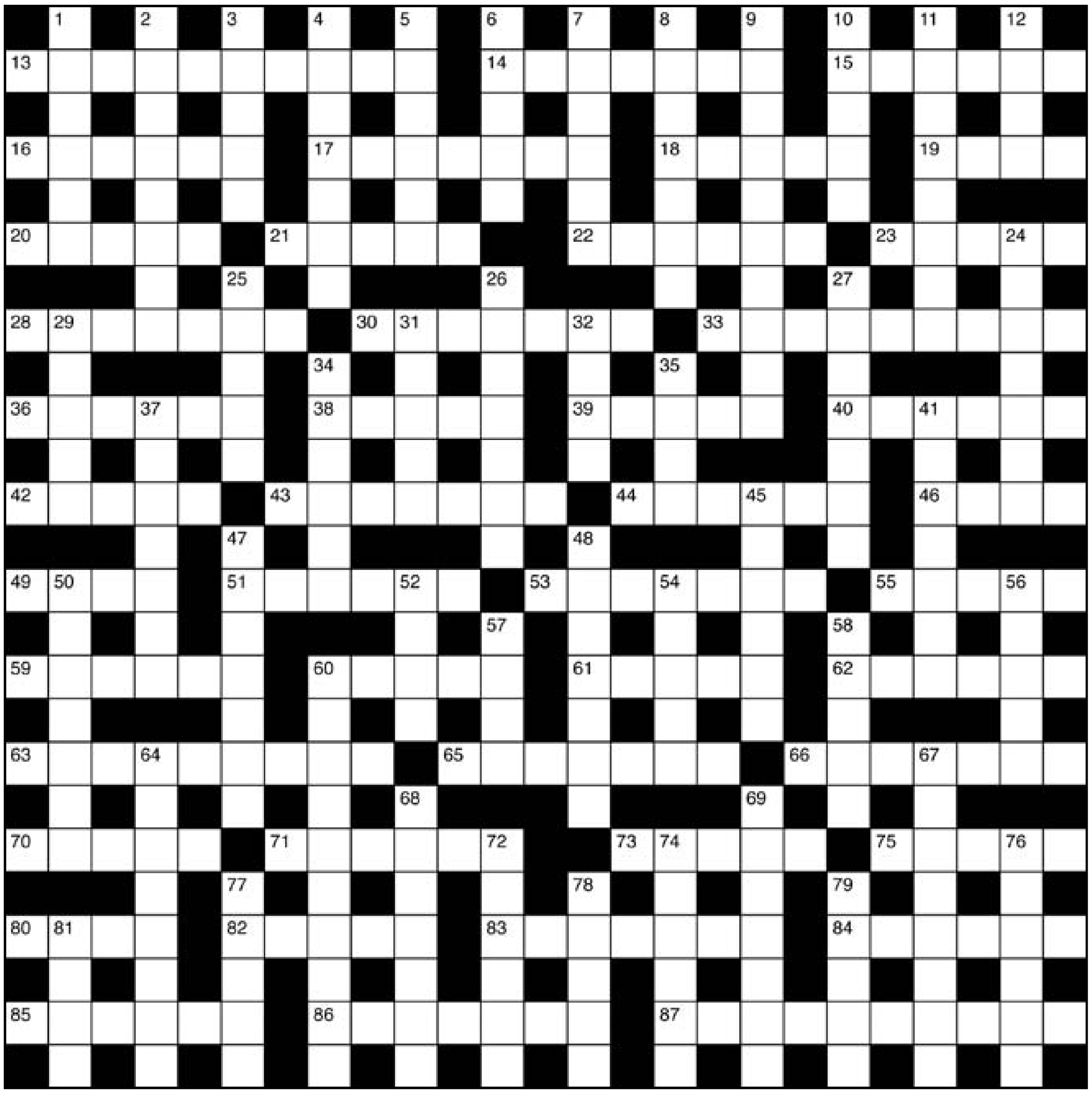
ACROSS

1. Questionable tale (5,5)
7. Firearm (5)
8. Bristly growth (7)
10. African (8)
11. Impolite (4)
13. Of aromatic plants (6)
15. Caretaker (6)
17. Male sheep (4)
18. Repudiate (8)
21. Main female character (7)
22. Shelf (5)
23. Unenforced law (4,6)

DOWN

1. Number (5)
2. Ghostlike (8)
3. Sycophant (3-3)
4. Therefore (4)
5. Spring back (7)
6. Protestant organisation (4,6)
9. Digit divisible by two (4,6)
12. Arthurian knight (8)
14. Regret (7)
16. Card game call (6)
19. Viper (5)
20. Sort (4)

JUMBO CROSSWORD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49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56
57 58
59 60 61 62
63 64 65 66 67
68 69
70 71 72 73 74 75 76
77 78 79
80 81 82 83 84
85 86 87

ACROSS

13. Gets lost (5,5)
14. Yell (7)
15. Forewarning (6)
16. Marvel (6)
17. Becoming (7)
18. Wine (5)
19. Heart (4)
20. Less than (5)
21. Strength (5)
22. Bad (6)
23. Stupid (5)
28. Thwarted (7)
30. Odd (7)
33. Willingly (4,1,4)
36. Outlaw (6)
38. Frightening (5)
39. Item (5)
40. Pickle (6)
42. Horrify (5)
43. Preserved (7)
44. Period (6)
46. Cushions (4)
49. Hurried (4)
51. Respect (6)
53. Hide (7)
55. Because (5)
59. Seat (6)
60. Dirt (5)
61. Precise (5)
62. Run (6)
63. Interceded (7,2)
65. Monk (7)
66. Drawn (7)
70. Intelligence (5)
71. Dodges (6)
73. Ordinary (5)
75. Seat (5)
80. Too (4)
82. Excite (5)
83. Refers to (5,2)
84. Accelerate (6)
85. Material (6)
86. Schooling (7)
87. Undecided (2,3,5)

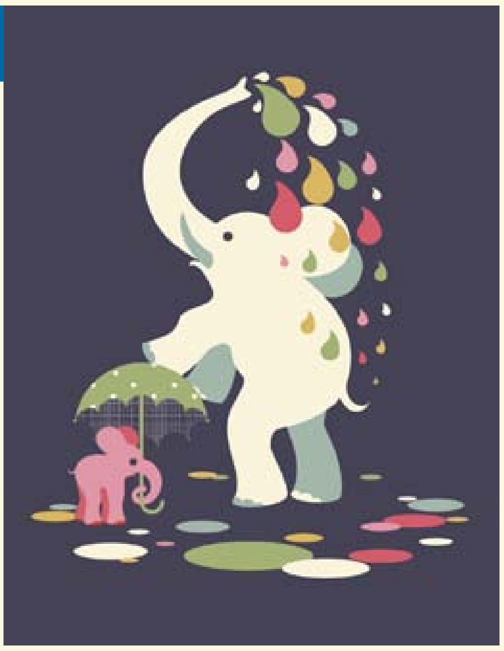
DOWN

1. Be beaten (2,4)
2. Unnecessary (8)
3. Rant (5)
4. Snip (7)
5. Drawing (6)
6. Step (5)
7. Boat (6)
8. Unyielding (7)
9. Rehearsing (10)
10. Booth (5)
11. Biscuits (8)
12. Market (4)
24. Informed on (7)
25. Irritable (5)
26. Fruit (7)
27. Deduces (7)
29. Extend (5)
31. Suppose (5)
32. Acquires (4)
34. Forcing (6)
35. Ascend (4)
37. Settled (7)
41. Answered (7)
45. Case (6)
47. Plant (7)
48. Reminder (7)
50. Dish (7)
52. Precipitation (4)
54. Find (5)
56. Distinct (5)
57. Stand (4)
58. Calm (5)
60. Terribly (10)
64. Flower (8)
67. Contradicted (8)
68. Assorted (7)
69. Argument (7)
72. Bar (6)
74. Girl (6)
76. Changes (6)
77. Command (5)
78. Vague (5)
79. Cry (5)
81. Useless (4)

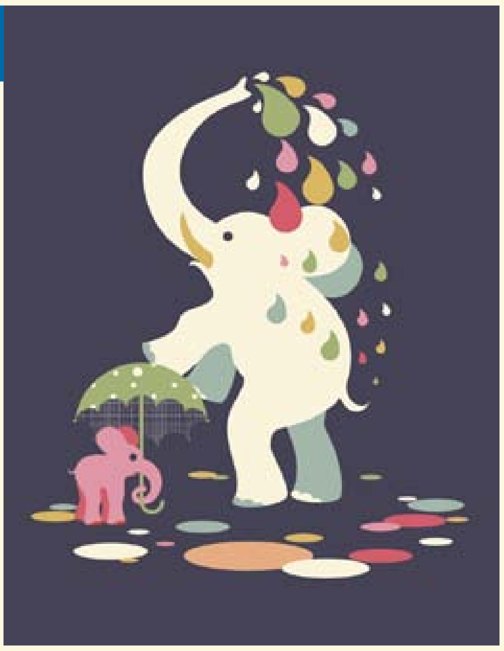
SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot the six differences between these two pictures?

A



B



NUMBERCRUNCH

Follow the instructions from left to right, starting with the number given to reach an answer at the end of the row

BEGINNER 64	Take the square root	+7	×3	Reverse the digits	-26	3/4 of this	-9	×4	ANSWER
INTERMEDIATE 245	60% of this	+165	7/8 of this	+37	7/10 of this	-74	÷11	+296	ANSWER
ADVANCED 541	-186	Increase by 60%	+68	7/12 of this	-47	Take the square root	+268	8/11 of this	ANSWER

GIANT SUDOKU

Every row, every column and every 5 x 5 box must contain every digit from 1 to 9 and every letter from K to Z.

R		Q		4	M		Y		P		3		L						V					T
			N	3				Z	5			P	W	K		Y					Q	7	V	2
O	T	Y			7		3		1			R	X			U			L				6	5
6		L					K	O		N	7				T						R	8		4
				K		9					2	S			M	X								
2	Z	W	S			3										6		V		8				7
	L			V	1	8					K	U				W				N				
		O	8			Z	2	9		Y		7	3		S	5			N				P	U
	7								L	R			5				Y			M			3	
N		1			W	5			Y				2	V		M			9	O				
	V	3		6		M			R		T	9			Y	L		K		P			8	W
M				N	X	Q	S				8	L	U							T	Z			
L					K	V			8		Q	2	R	Y	1				4		6	5		S
	K	X			4		Z	L	2	V	6		M			8								3
S		4	2					5				K	O	P			6				9			M
	9	6		M				Q		Z		Y	4		3		O	X		R	V		2	
	4	T			Z		R	K	7	L			N						1		S	O	M	9
		V		Q			N			1			9	W	U	R				Y				6
	2	S	1			Y	P	V	9											W		3	5	Q
					L		O	8	S	2				7		T						1		
Q		N					U	3			X		K	R	2	O	L		T				9	
3					8										Q	N			6		T	4	L	
X				9	2	K		1	Q	6	Z		T		4			R		U		N	W	P
	8	U	4	5				X	Z		L		P	O	W		M		Y					
		M	V		R			Y	4						5	K							S	

MEDIUM SUDOKU 1

7	3				6			8
		6		8		3		
	9	8			2		6	
		5	4	6		7		
	7						9	
		4		7	3	6		2
4							1	
		1		2		4		
8			1	3			7	5

VERY HARD SUDOKU 1

		8		7				
			2				8	6
	5				3	7		
2		7						8
	6	5				9	1	
9						3		5
		6	3				4	
1	7				4			
				6		2		

CROSS OUT 1

Cross out one of the two letters in each divided square to reveal a completed crossword grid.

S/T	W/E	D/I	S/G	E/T
X/Y		A/N		A/P
P/S	E/O	W/D	A/E	D/L
W/E		N/E		E/H
M/S	I/U	S/X	E/O	N/S

CROSS OUT 2

B/C	I/O	A/O	G/T	S/H
E/F		P/G		H/T
W/A	W/R	A/I	S/R	E/T
W/D		Z/I		C/M
R/S	I/U	N/T	M/G	S/E

IMPOSSUDOKU 1

	8			6		4	2	
	7							
			4			5	3	
		1	9					2
8			5	7	1			6
6					3			
	1	6			5			
							6	
	3	7		2			9	

MEDIUM SUDOKU 2

			7			5		
1	9			4			3	
2		5	9		3		8	
	1			8				7
	5		2				4	
3				1			2	
		1	4		2	3		5
	3			5			1	9
		6			9			8

VERY HARD SUDOKU 2

	1						6	4
			1			8		7
				3	4		9	
5				1		4	2	
	6	7		2				3
	9		5	6				
7		1			8			
3	4					2		

IMPOSSUDOKU 2

		9	5	2				
				8	3	4		
1		8					5	
6							2	
9	5						8	7
	1							5
	9					6		8
		3	8	4				
				5	1	7		

PATHFINDER 1

PATHFINDER 2

From the top corner, make a path of words linked to the theme. The trail goes through each letter once but never diagonally.

Asian countries

I	I	A	P	B	I	A	B	E	A	L	S	I	I	L
N	S	E	A	A	R	U	Z	K	M	A	Y	A	R	A
D	I	N	K	I	A	I	S	I	N	E	E	N	S	N
C	A	O	D	S	T	D	T	Y	E	M	P	A	L	K
H	I	N	N	N	A	U	A	N	I	D	O	A	C	A
L	I	A	I	B	A	A	S	N	A	S	B	M	O	S
I	H	A	P	A	N	G	T	A	N	I	E	L	A	O
P	P	N	H	J	A	L	S	I	G	O	R	N	A	M
P	E	S	S	E	D	H	A	N	A	P	U	K	U	T
I	N	V	I	A	F	G	A	E	G	T	W	B	H	A
R	U	T	E	Q	A	R	I	R	E	I	A	S	B	N
K	E	N	T	N	T	H	K	O	O	R	R	U	R	U
T	Y	A	R	A	U	O	S	A	I	G	P	N	I	N
H	L	A	I	M	A	N	R	Q	A	R	Y	C	A	E
A	I	N	D	M	Y	M	A	A	T	B	A	H	R	I

Frank Sinatra hits

Y	A	T	H	R	E	O	I	F	O	I	G	N	L	E
O	G	H	T	T	E	C	N	H	R	E	H	G	I	G
U	N	E	A	R	F	E	S	C	R	F	H	O	H	I
E	V	O	N	U	O	H	I	N	E	T	E	P	N	O
L	O	L	T	A	I	T	N	R	A	F	S	A	N	A
E	V	Y	M	U	N	C	H	C	B	Y	M	R	A	D
A	M	A	R	O	Y	T	I	W	L	U	N	G	M	Y
N	D	I	R	C	H	A	G	O	H	E	E	N	I	K
H	D	A	G	E	I	C	W	Y	E	A	V	D	R	L
A	E	H	A	L	L	L	A	M	E	T	A	O	I	H
V	E	G	U	E	R	A	Y	T	F	S	H	F	G	E
O	Y	E	L	M	R	Y	E	H	I	L	T	T	L	L
U	R	S	F	A	Y	L	N	T	H	E	G	H	O	D
A	M	I	R	E	L	I	I	E	G	N	I	S	Y	O
S	T	S	H	C	T	T	S	R	N	A	R	T	L	L

WORDSEARCH 1

WORDSEARCH 2

Find 12 words in the left and 13 words in the right grid.

Phrases starting with 'Red'

L	E	T	T	E	R	D	A	Y	C
I	Z	B	X	N	C	O	Q	S	H
Z	X	E	B	R	E	A	S	T	I
S	G	O	O	D	G	Y	E	A	N
E	N	S	I	G	N	P	Y	I	A
T	S	Q	U	I	R	R	E	L	A
T	H	V	L	A	R	I	M	D	A
E	D	R	C	B	B	R	I	C	K
R	H	E	R	R	I	N	G	X	H
K	C	E	N	B	Y	M	R	K	O

Scottish islands

Z	F	U	S	I	W	E	L	F	O
C	N	O	R	T	H	U	I	S	T
B	I	S	K	Y	E	P	T	P	S
J	R	Q	Y	Q	G	G	I	E	I
N	U	H	P	A	A	L	R	K	U
A	D	R	U	S	L	L	E	Y	H
R	X	O	A	M	G	S	E	H	T
R	E	A	R	R	A	B	I	A	U
A	S	B	C	A	N	N	A	X	O
D	N	A	L	N	I	A	M	O	S

ARROWWORD 1

Bringing of goods Japanese sauce		Striped mammal Spirit		Chewy sweet		Style of dance	
Drag clumsily Red pepper				Small protuberance		Pungent vegetable	
							Circular mark
Aeroplane		Destroys Actor, _ Hiddleston					
			Mistake in audio recording				
Pilfer Fitness centre				Toilet			
			Crooked				

ARROWWORD 2

Showering Plot giveaways		Sorceress Rowing paddle		Practise		Request	
Rodent Tramped				Wicked spell		Deplete of energy	
							Wheel covering
Make an offer		Bodily organ Excavate					
			Medical scan (1-3)				
Sharp bite Hen's produce				Male title			
			_ Wilder, actor				

SOLUTIONS

PAGE ONE

ENTERTAINMENT CROSSWORD

Across: 1 Julian; 4 O'Donnell; 10 O'Hanlon; 11 Olly Smith; 12 Twiggy; 16 Bianca; 18 O'Neal; 19 Sheen; 22 Dee; 23 Renta; 24 Laila; 25 Ada; 27 Kamen; 29 Coyle; 30 Dakota; 31 Caruso; 37 Hemsworth; 38 Edmonds; 39 McDonald; 40 Damian.
Down: 1 Jools Holland; 2 Liam; 3 Ally; 5 Daley; 6 Nash; 7 Leto; 8 Snow; 9 Dougie; 13 Van; 14 Meera; 15 Blunt; 17 Alex Ferguson; 19 Swank; 20 Nolan; 21 Birch; 22 Daryl; 26 Joe; 28 Murphy; 31 Carol; 32 Sven; 33 Mel C; 34 Ewan; 35 Emma; 36 Andi.

CODEWORD

1

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
S	V	C	R	H	N	X	B	D	P	W	Q	G
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Z	T	M	F	L	A	U	J	O	Y	I	E	K

2

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
K	J	E	W	M	V	Z	O	H	F	Y	S	L
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
B	U	I	X	C	G	R	P	D	A	N	Q	T

PAGES TWO AND THREE:

SAMURAI SUDOKU

1	3	9	4	7	2	5	8	6				7	6	9	2	3	1	4	8	5
4	5	8	6	9	1	3	2	7				1	5	3	8	6	4	7	2	9
6	2	7	5	3	8	9	4	1				2	8	4	9	5	7	1	3	6
8	7	2	3	1	6	4	9	5				4	9	6	7	8	2	3	5	1
9	1	3	7	5	4	8	6	2				3	1	5	4	9	6	2	7	8
5	6	4	8	2	9	1	7	3				8	2	7	3	1	5	6	9	4
3	4	1	9	6	7	2	5	8	7	4	9	6	3	1	5	2	9	8	4	7
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2	8	6	1	4	5	7	3	9	1	6	8	5	4	2	6	7	8	9	1	3
						1	9	2	3	7	6	4	8	5						
						3	7	6	4	8	5	1	2	9						
						4	8	5	2	9	1	3	6	7						
4	6	3	8	7	9	5	2	1	8	3	4	7	9	6	5	8	4	1	3	2
5	1	8	6	3	2	9	4	7	6	5	2	8	1	3	7	6	2	9	4	5
2	7	9	1	4	5	8	6	3	9	1	7	2	5	4	9	1	3	8	7	6
7	4	1	9	6	3	2	5	8				9	6	7	1	2	8	3	5	4
9	2	5	7	8	4	3	1	6				4	8	1	3	7	5	6	2	9
3	8	6	5	2	1	4	7	9				3	2	5	4	9	6	7	1	8
8	5	4	3	1	7	6	9	2				6	4	8	2	3	7	5	9	1
6	9	7	2	5	8	1	3	4				5	7	9	8	4	1	2	6	3
1	3	2	4	9	6	7	8	5				1	3	2	6	5	9	4	8	7

EASY SUDOKU

1

3	1	6	7	5	4	9	8	2
7	2	9	1	3	8	6	4	5
8	5	4	2	6	9	7	1	3
4	7	1	9	2	3	5	6	8
6	8	3	5	1	7	2	9	4
5	9	2	8	4	6	1	3	7
1	4	5	6	8	2	3	7	9
2	3	7	4	9	1	8	5	6
9	6	8	3	7	5	4	2	1

2

7	3	4	2	6	8	5	1	9
9	5	2	3	4	1	8	7	6
8	6	1	7	5	9	4	2	3
4	8	7	1	3	6	9	5	2
3	1	5	9	2	7	6	4	8
2	9	6	5	8	4	7	3	1
5	7	8	6	1	2	3	9	4
1	4	9	8	7	3	2	6	5
6	2	3	4	9	5	1	8	7

HARD SUDOKU

1

3	9	4	1	7	2	6	5	8
2	7	1	6	5	8	4	3	9
8	6	5	9	4	3	7	1	2
4	2	8	7	3	9	1	6	5
7	3	6	8	1	5	9	2	4
1	5	9	4	2	6	3	8	7
9	1	3	2	8	7	5	4	6
6	4	2	5	9	1	8	7	3
5	8	7	3	6	4	2	9	1

2

1	2	4	5	9	6	3	7	8
7	6	5	8	1	3	4	2	9
8	9	3	4	2	7	1	6	5
9	1	6	7	4	2	5	8	3
4	8	7	3	5	1	2	9	6
3	5	2	9	6	8	7	4	1
5	4	1	6	7	9	8	3	2
6	7	8	2	3	5	9	1	4
2	3	9	1	8	4	6	5	7

FUTOSHIKI

1

3		4	>	1		5		2
4	<	5		2		1		3
				∧		∧		
5		1	<	3	>	2		4
2		3		5		4		1
1		2		4		3	<	5

2

5		2		3		4		1
2	>	1		4		5		3
∧								
3	<	4	<	5		1		2
1		5		2		3	<	4
				∨		∨		∧
4		3		1		2		5

KILLER SUDOKU

1

1	9	5	8	7	3	6	2	4
7	4	2	1	6	9	8	3	5
6	8	3	4	5	2	1	9	7
5	1	9	2	8	7	3	4	6
2	6	4	3	9	1	5	7	8
8	3	7	6	4	5	2	1	9
4	5	1	9	2	6	7	8	3
9	2	6	7	3	8	4	5	1
3	7	8	5	1	4	9	6	2

2

9	5	6	2	3	1	8	4	7
7	1	4	9	8	6	3	2	5
2	3	8	4	7	5	6	9	1
4	9	3	1	6	7	5	8	2
5	6	7	8	2	9	4	1	3
8	2	1	3	5	4	7	6	9
6	4	9	7	1	3	2	5	8
3	8	5	6	9	2	1	7	4
1	7	2	5	4	8	9	3	6

NUMBERFIT

1

■	7	1	■	3	2	4	4	2
2	■	2	4	4	3	■	■	1
1	1	2	■	2	2	1	■	1
1	4	■	1	1	4	1	3	3
3	3	4	4	■	4	3	4	4
1	1	4	3	1	1	■	4	1
4	■	2	2	3	■	3	3	2
2	■	■	2	4	5	3	■	3
3	3	2	4	2	■	1	7	■

2

■	■	2	5	4	4	2	3	5
■	6	8	3	1	2	9	■	6
5	7	5	■	2	3	5	7	6
1	4	8	■	■	■	8	4	3
2	6	8	5	5	9	8	5	2
6	4	9	■	■	■	5	4	1
6	7	5	3	2	■	9	7	3
4	■	8	2	1	4	9	6	■
3	1	2	4	4	5	2	■	■

ALPHADOKU

1

Y	S	X	T	U	V	Z	R	W
Z	W	V	X	S	R	U	Y	T
R	T	U	Y	Z	W	S	X	V
U	V	Z	R	Y	T	W	S	X
T	X	R	V	W	S	Y	U	Z
S	Y	W	U	X	Z	V	T	R
V	R	Y	Z	T	U	X	W	S
X	Z	S	W	R	Y	T	V	U
W	U	T	S	V	X	R	Z	Y

2

W	R	X	T	V	S	Z	Y	U
T	Y	S	Z	R	U	X	W	V
U	Z	V	W	Y	X	S	R	T
X	U	T	V	Z	W	R	S	Y
Y	S	W	X	U	R	V	T	Z
R	V	Z	Y	S	T	U	X	W
Z	W	Y	S	X	V	T	U	R
V	X	U	R	T	Y	W	Z	S
S	T	R	U	W	Z	Y	V	X

KAKURO

1

			4	9			6	3	
	3	5	7	8	9		8	4	3
	2	1		3	7			1	7
				7	8		9	5	
	7	5			1	4	3		
	9	1			3	2	7	4	
		3	4		2	1		8	6
			1	2	6			9	4
		8	5	6	4	2			
	3	9			5	9	6	7	
	5	6					5	3	

2

		1	3	2			7	3	
	7	6	5	3		4	5	1	3
	4	2			5	8		4	7
		3	1		1	3		6	9
	6	9	8	7		6	2	8	
	3	7	5	4	2	9	1		
				9	5			3	5
		4	6	8	3	5		1	2
	9	6	8		9	7		4	7
	7	1	2	8		3	8	2	
		2	3	4		1	2		

PAGES FOUR AND FIVE:

BIG CROSSWORD 1

Across: 8 Deliver, 9 Muscovite, 13 Unite, 14 Raise, 15 Durable, 16 Gutless, 17 Light, 18 Chant, 20 Eaves, 22 Resent, 23 Morsel, 25 Arsenal, 27 Passing, 30 Twitch, 31 Bottle, 32 Tacos, 35 Aroma, 36 Enrol, 37 Deadpan, 39 Chatted, 41 Ewers, 42 Evoke, 43 Plentiful, 44 Feasted.
Down: 1 Depict, 2 Timeless, 3 Terrestrial, 4 Aubergine, 5 Acidity, 6 Avaricious, 7 Stub, 10 Bungle, 11 Aimless, 12 Rental, 19 Arsenic, 21 Vertigo, 24 Haberdasher, 26 Enchanting, 28 Courteous, 29 Stalled, 30 Trance, 32 Traverse, 33 Singer, 34 Tendril, 38 Phoney, 40 Able.

BIG CROSSWORD 2

Across: 9 Complete, 10 Due, 11 Eleven, 12 Stance, 13 Deliver, 14 Rain, 15 Incinerate, 17 Watchdog, 18 Bravado, 19 Sari, 21 Resist, 24 Bring home the bacon, 27 Stress, 29 Path, 30 Taverna, 33 Dentures, 35 Generosity, 36 Oboe, 37 Notable, 38 Verify, 40 Seldom, 41 Odd, 42 Derisive.
Down: 1 Boston crab, 2 Open, 3 Reverend, 4 Deadpan, 5 Heavyweight, 6 Heart-throb, 7 Search, 8 Perilous, 10 Delve, 16 Invoice, 20 Avert, 22 Sachets, 23 Composition, 25 Gastronomy, 26 Nine to five, 28 Trembles, 31 Aardvark, 32 Unready, 34 Trends, 35 Go bad, 39 Ruse.

JUMBO CROSSWORD

Across: 13 Loses track; 14 Thunder; 15 Threat; 16 Wonder; 17 Getting; 18 Macon; 19 Core; 20 Under; 21 Might; 22 Rancid; 23 Dense; 28 Crossed; 30 Strange; 33 Like a shot; 36 Bandit; 38 Awing; 39 Thing; 40 Scrape; 42 Shock; 43 Pickled; 44 Season; 46 Pads; 49 Sped; 51 Regard; 53 Leather; 55 Since; 59 Saddle; 60 Grime; 61 Exact; 62 Ladder; 63 Stepped in; 65 Brother; 66 Haggard; 70 Brain; 71 Avoids; 73 Plain; 75 Divan; 80 Over; 82 Rouse; 83 Looks up; 84 Hasten; 85 Tissue; 86 Lessons; 87 In two minds.
Down: 1 Go down; 2 Needless; 3 Storm; 4 Bargain; 5 Sketch; 6 Stair; 7 Lugger; 8 Adamant; 9 Practising; 10 Stand; 11 Crackers; 12 Fair; 24 Shopped; 25 Testy; 26 Mangoes; 27 Reasons; 29 Reach; 31 Think; 32 Gets; 34 Making; 35 Rise; 37 Decided; 41 Replied; 45 Sheath; 47 Creeper; 48 Memento; 50 Platter; 52 Rain; 54 Trace; 56 Clear; 57 Bear; 58 Allay; 60 Grievously; 64 Primrose; 67 Gainsaid; 68 Diverse; 69 Dispute; 72 Saloon; 74 Lassie; 76 Amends; 77 Order; 78 Loose; 79 Whoop; 81 Vain.

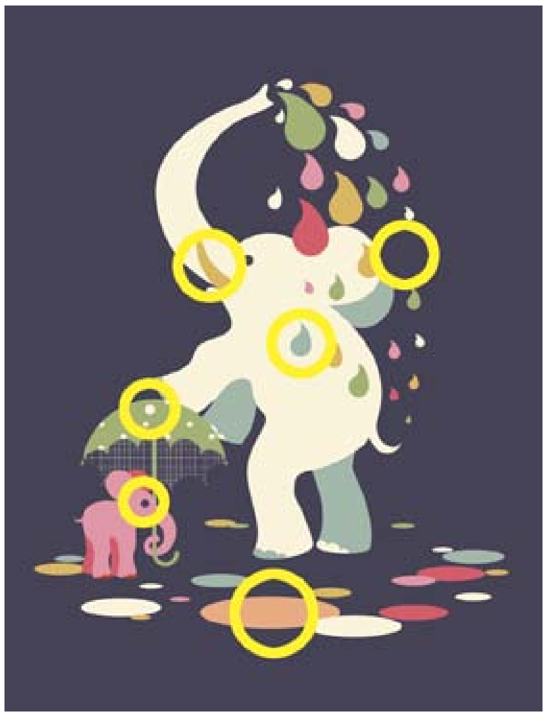
TWO-SPEED

Across: 1 Fishy story; 7 Rifle; 8 Stubble; 10 Egyptian; 11 Rude; 13 Herbal; 15 Warden; 17 Rams; 18 Disclaim; 21 Heroine; 22 Ledge; 23 Dead letter.
Down: 1 Fifty; 2 Spectral; 3 Yes-man; 4 Thus; 5 Rebound; 6 Free church; 9 Even number; 12 Lancelot; 14 Remorse; 16 Misere; 19 Adder; 20 Kind.

NUMBERCRUNCH

Beginner 48
Intermediate 309
Advanced 208

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



PAGES SIX AND SEVEN:

PATHFINDER

1 India, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, Iran, Turkey, Thailand, Myanmar, South Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Singapore, Laos, Oman, Kuwait, Georgia, Qatar, Bahrain, Cyprus, Bhutan, Brunei.

2 Young at Heart, Three Coins in the Fountain, You My Love, Love and Marriage, Chicago, Witchcraft, French Foreign Legion, High Hopes, My Blue Heaven, Granada, My Kind of Girl, Hello, Dolly!, Strangers in the Night, That's Life, My Way, They All Laughed, Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.

GIANT SUDOKU

R	1	Q	5	4	M	S	Y	2	P	O	3	6	L	U	K	7	Z	8	V	9	W	X	N	T
9	X	8	N	3	U	R	L	Z	5	T	M	P	W	K	6	Y	1	4	O	S	Q	7	V	2
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MEDIUM SUDOKU

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5	2	6	1	3	9	4	7	8

VERY HARD SUDOKU

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IMPOSSUDOKU

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CROSS OUT

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2

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S	I	N	G	S

ARROWWORD

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2

	S		W		R		A
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WORDSEARCH

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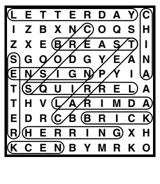

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E	N	S	I	G	N	P	Y	I	A
T	S	Q	U	I	R	R	E	L	A
T	H	V	L	A	R	I	M	D	A
E	D	R	C	B	B	R	I	C	K
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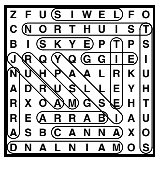
2



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C	N	O	R	T	H	U	I	S	T
B	I	S	K	Y	E	P	T	P	S
J	R	Q	Y	Q	G	G	I	E	I
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A	D	R	U	S	L	L	E	Y	H
R	X	O	A	M	G	S	E	H	T
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D	N	A	L	N	I	A	M	O	S

DAILY EXPRESS

Fever Pitch

express.co.uk/sport

YOUR FOOTBALL WEEKEND STARTS HERE

WHITE-HOT RECEPTION
United boss Ruben Amorim can expect a rough ride from the Elland Road faithful

WELCOME TO ELL

'War of the Roses' even had Sir Alex running scared, so heaven help Ruben

LEEDS UTD
MAN UTD
TOMORROW
KO: 12.30pm

ELLIOTT IN LOAN LIMBO AS VILLA LOOK TO CUT LOSSES – PAGE 4

WOLVES v WEST HAM

Premier League: KO 3pm

PAIN STILL HITS HARD FOR NUNO

WEST HAM head coach Nuno Espirito Santo has brought up 200 matches as a Premier League boss yet admits he still takes defeats as badly as he did when he first started.

Unfortunately for the 51-year-old (above), his side have lost seven of the 14 matches they have played since he took charge, winning just two, to leave them languishing in the bottom three.

"No, we don't deal with bad results well," he said. "It's painful.

"Believe me, when you don't win and you go on a [bad] run, you feel that it's there to take and it's hard on everybody. Especially on who has the responsibility, because we are in a big club and it requires better."

Match No.201 will be at rock-bottom Wolves, where Nuno began his career in England more than eight years ago, followed by another six-pointer against the club he left in September, 17th-placed Nottingham Forest.

Nuno said: "It's huge. It's going to be a quick turnaround."

The Hammers are understood to be close to signing striker Pablo Felipe, 21, from Portuguese club Gil Vicente. He will replace Niclas Fullkrug, who has joined AC Milan on loan.

Wolves are also expected to be busy, with head coach Rob Edwards saying the club will do "a lot of work" in the transfer market this month in a bid to revive their desperate season.

Wolves picked up only their third point of the campaign with a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford on Tuesday but are 15 points off safety.

Edwards said: "There will be a lot of work going on behind the scenes on both incomings and outgoings."

Striker Jorgen Strand Larsen continues to be linked with a move away, but Edwards said: "His attitude has been brilliant."

BRIGHTON v BURNLEY

Premier League: KO 3pm

PARKER TO RING IN CHANGES

SCOTT PARKER is expecting a busy January transfer window at Turf Moor, with players heading in both directions.

The Clarets' have been hit by injuries to key players, while others are on Africa Cup of Nations duty, leaving Parker to consider his transfer options.

Ahead of Burnley's trip to Brighton today, Parker (above) said: "There is an opportunity for us and there are a lot of dynamics and I can only name a 25-man squad.

"It's not as easy as bringing in five players, as I need to think about who is coming and who is going. We will try and be reactive to long-term injuries. We will work through it in this window."

When asked if he expected some outgoings, Parker said: "I think so, we have a big squad and that's without players who are out on loan and there will be players who want or need football, so this window is an opportunity for them to get that."

Burnley will still be without defender Maxime Esteve today, while Joe Worrall and Zian Flemming remain doubtful.

Lyle Foster (South Africa), Hannibal Mejbri (Tunisia) and Axel Tuanzebe (DR Congo) are still on Afcon duty and skipper Josh Cullen is likely to miss the rest of the season with an anterior cruciate ligament injury.

Brighton manager Fabian Hurzeler made it clear he rates Pascal Gross highly amid rumours the German could rejoin the Seagulls.

The midfielder moved to Borussia Dortmund in the summer of 2024 after seven years at Brighton.

"I definitely like him as a player," said Hurzeler. "I had contact with him because we tried to keep him, but he wanted to follow his dream."

LEEDS UNITED v MAN UNITED

KO 12.30pm tomorrow

UNITED IN POISON AND SPITE

Amorim's set for his first go at a rivalry that shocked even Fergie

BY **JEREMY CROSS**

JUST when Ruben Amorim needed some comfort and solace, the Manchester United head coach has been left reaching for his tin hat instead.

Because the Portuguese will not get a warm welcome at Elland Road tomorrow.

Amorim will get a red-hot one instead, filled with the sort of poison and spite that even Sir Alex Ferguson could never quite understand.

Unless Amorim has been living under a rock, he should be aware of the genuine hatred that exists between United and Leeds.

Both might have 'United' in their names – but nothing could be further from the truth.

This will be Amorim's first trip to Elland Road since taking charge of United and nothing can quite prepare him for what lies in wait.

Not least because he travels to Yorkshire at a time when Leeds are full of confidence as well as adrenaline, following a six-game unbeaten run which incudes a home thumping of Chelsea and two draws with Liverpool, including a point from their midweek trip to Anfield.

The game is kicking off at 12.30pm tomorrow for a reason. To limit the amount of time both sets of supporters have to indulge in alcohol.

It has become the norm for West Yorkshire Police to cancel all leave and have extra officers patrolling the game.

Senior figures from both clubs have been known to meet with police in the past to discuss security measures.

While former United chief executive Ed Woodward once considered not attending a game at Elland Road, because he genuinely feared for his safety.

If this is not enough to leave Amorim bracing himself for a cauldron of hate, he should consider what Fergie once said about the rivalry between United and Leeds.

Back in 2011, ahead of a Carling Cup game at Elland Road, a large group of Leeds fans congregated outside the United team hotel in the city centre.

The atmosphere became so toxic, Fergie was scared to leave the building. And he believed the vitriol between both sets of supporters even exceeded the levels which existed between United and Liverpool.

Fergie said: "Historically, it has been there for a long time. I have always said Liverpool-Manchester United games are fierce in many aspects.

"Sometimes supporters can play a bad part in that particular game. But it never reaches the levels of Leeds United. Never.

"It was frightening at our hotel. We had seven police vans round the hotel protecting the team. I don't know why it is like that. I don't understand it. But it is there and it is not nice."

The hatred is historical, due to geography and the envy of supporters of different generations towards the respective clubs' successes.

Leeds, who have no such rivalry with another Yorkshire club, dominated the 1970s while United ruled the roost in the 1990s and 2000s.

Some Leeds supporters have spent decades taunting United about the 1958 Munich air crash, while in more recent times a section of United fans have goaded Leeds about the two fans who were murdered in Istanbul in 2000.

Now Leeds are back in the Premier League, football's long-standing 'War of the Roses' will resume once again.

And Amorim will head across the Pennines to find himself on the frontline of the kind of battle he has never come close to experiencing before.

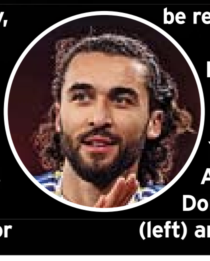
Ruben is all ready to taste the difference

BY **TYRONE MARSHALL**

RUBEN AMORIM has experienced similar fixtures in Portugal as a player for Benfica and coach of Sporting, but expects the rivalry between Manchester United and Leeds tomorrow to be different.

United head coach Amorim said: "I never experienced this one. In Portugal it [Benfica v Sporting] is a big rivalry, different environment, different culture.

"The noise is going to be big, it's hard to compare different cultures, let's just focus on the derby, we will try to win. When you play for Manchester United you need to be ready for everything."



United face an in-form Leeds side, who are now six games unbeaten after earning a New Year's Day point at Anfield despite resting Dominic Calvert-Lewin (left) and Noah Okafor.

Amorim admitted the pace in Daniel Farke's side could cause his team some problems.

"They have a lot of pace and sometimes we struggle with pace," he said. "We know they change the system; the last game they rotated two players who are usually starters. Good players, and a good manager."

FIGHT CLUBS

Amorim will get his first taste of the War of the Roses tomorrow

THREE BIG CLASHES

Leeds 3 Manchester United 4 - March 30, 2002

Manchester United headed into the clash as defending champions, and needing to win to keep their hopes of landing another title alive.

What transpired was arguably the greatest game between these two old rivals in the Premier League era. Paul Scholes fired United ahead before Mark Viduka struck. But Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (below) hit an instinctive double to put United 3-1 ahead, before Ryan Giggs added a fourth, only for Leeds to respond through Ian Harte and Lee Bowyer, to set up a frantic finish at a throbbing Elland Road.

Leeds 2 Manchester United 4 - February 20, 2021

Elland Road was pulsating again when Manchester United charged into a two-goal lead, only to squander it after allowing Leeds to roar back and level matters. Headers from Harry Maguire and Bruno Fernandes appeared to have put United in total control. But Leeds refused to buckle and battled back with two goals in a minute from Rodrigo and Raphinha. But hopes of a famous comeback win ended in ruins when Fred made it 3-2 to United, before Anthony Elanga completed the triumph two minutes from time.

Leeds 1 Manchester United 0 - September 14, 2002

Tensions had rarely been higher when Sir Alex Ferguson's men travelled to Elland Road to take on their bitter rivals. United had signed Rio Ferdinand just weeks earlier, having taken advantage of Leeds' increasing financial troubles. But Ferdinand was abused throughout (above) in a white-hot atmosphere, on what proved to be a miserable return to Elland Road. An unmarked Harry Kewell (below)arrived at the back post to head home the only goal – and seal a famous win.

TOXIC SHOCK

Ferguson felt the level of animosity surpassed clashes with Liverpool

HEADS WE WIN

Rashford scores in Reds' most recent league visit to Leeds

LEEDS v MANCHESTER IN THE PREM:

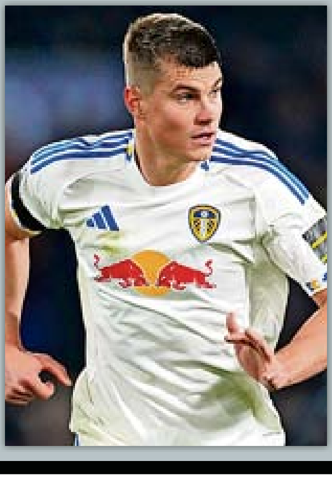
Games - 30 Leeds wins - 4 Draws - 9 Man United wins - 17

RECORD WITH LEEDS AT HOME IN THE PREM:

Games - 15 Leeds wins - 4 Draws - 4 Man United wins - 7

PREMIER TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	19	14	3	2	37	12	45
Man City	19	13	2	4	43	17	41
Aston Villa	19	12	3	4	30	23	39
Liverpool	19	10	3	6	30	26	33
Chelsea	19	8	6	5	32	21	30
Man Utd	19	8	6	5	33	29	30
Sunderland	19	7	8	4	20	18	29
Everton	19	8	4	7	20	20	28
Brentford	19	8	3	8	28	26	27
Crystal Palace	19	7	6	6	22	21	27
Fulham	19	8	3	8	26	27	27
Tottenham	19	7	5	7	27	23	26
Newcastle	19	7	5	7	26	24	26
Brighton	19	6	7	6	28	27	25
Bournemouth	19	5	8	6	29	35	23
Leeds	19	5	6	8	25	32	21
Nottm Forest	19	5	3	11	18	30	18
West Ham	19	3	5	11	21	38	14
Burnley	19	3	3	13	20	37	12
Wolves	19	0	3	16	11	40	3



'ANOTHER LEVEL TO MOSCOW DUEL'

LEEDS defender Jaka Bijol has played in some fierce Moscow derbies but admitted that is unlikely to have provided him with the right experience for the visit of Manchester United to Elland Road tomorrow.

It is almost three years since the sides last met, in a rivalry which owes its intensity to the Yorkshire-Lancashire animosity dating back to the War of the Roses and was magnified by matches during the 1960s and 70s. Its return was one of the most anticipated on the fixture list – particularly for Leeds fans.

Bijol's four years as a CSKA Moscow player saw him face Spartak in the biggest match in Russian football, but he knows tomorrow will be something entirely different and he has been left under no illusions of its importance by team-mates. "CSKA Moscow versus Spartak Moscow, it's a big one there. It cannot compare to the level here, of course," Bijol (left) said.

"In the locker room we already talked about it right after the [Liverpool] game, that we really want to bring the energy on Sunday and to perform. A full Elland Road is going to be electric, for sure, and we're going to make sure that we are here with a good performance. I think that in the last weeks, we've shown that we really want to bring every game 100 percent, not only derby games, but it always brings something more.

"You have to be there every week. If it's Manchester United or not, you have to perform like we did at Anfield."

ODDS AND NODS

William HILL

BY **LEE PHELPS**
William Hill spokesperson

IT'S been a bumper couple of weeks for Final One Standing players – £895,000 has been paid out to winners of eight different free-to-play leagues, including the original and biggest £500,000 jackpot shared between seven players.

There's a new £20k league every Premier League game week, picks must be in by 3pm today if you're not already involved in a game.

Aston Villa kick off the top-flight weekend at home to Nottingham Forest, which should be a great chance for boss Unai Emery (right) and Co to bounce back from losing to the Gunners.

Villa at home is a good start to your accumulator – you need four picks to activate Acca Boost.

West Ham are in must-win territory at Molineux, where they face a Wolves side looking for their first win this season.

Despite that, they have been competing, and I can see a draw in that one, along with the Brighton v Burnley game.

The Seagulls have hit a flat spot and, whilst they're hard to beat at home, Burnley have scored more away goals (below) than Arsenal.

Let's finish with the 5.30pm kick-off and an Epic Boost of both teams to score in Bournemouth versus Arsenal at Even money, instead of odds-on.

ADVERTORIAL

HARVEY WALLBANGER

ELL OF A BLOW Elliott's future is now unsettled as Villa do not want to sign him

Emery has Elliott on ice at Villa

ASTON VILLA v N FOREST
Premier League: KO 12.30pm

BY **JOHN TOWNLEY**

UNAI EMERY admitted that Aston Villa decided two months ago against signing Harvey Elliott from Liverpool permanently.

The 22-year-old's last appearance for Villa came at the end of October in the 2-0 win at Feyenoord and he is unlikely to be involved against Nottingham Forest today.

Despite scoring Villa's first goal of the season against Brentford in the Carabao Cup, Elliott has only featured five times for the club – half the number of appearances required for Villa to be obliged to sign him permanently.

The agreed transfer fee for Elliott, should he make 10 appearances while on loan, was £35million.

However, the two clubs are now in discussions to determine the midfielder's future as Emery explained that his departure would free up space to strengthen his squad.

"We have the issue with Harvey Elliott. Again, I am respecting all I can because he is a very good guy, a professional and respectful guy," Emery said. "The situation he has with us is something I must take a decision on, but trying not to damage the player as less as possible. He deserves the best for him.

"After it, if he is leaving, we can maybe try to use the position he is [in] to let us work something [in the market]. Until now, we only signed Alysson because we believe in his potential.

"Of course, we are opening the door for players with more experience. The players we have, I am so happy.

Emery (right) added: "The problem we have with Harvey is that he is on loan, and in case he plays matches we must buy him.

"We decided two months ago that we are not convinced to sign him, spending the money we would need to. This is the only issue.

"He is training every day with very good behaviour and to help us in training sessions.

"This is not something good for us and him, but this is football and sometimes we must make decisions."

While Elliott remains out in the cold, Emery is excited to unlock Alysson's potential at Aston Villa after signing the Brazilian winger from Gremio.

The 19-year-old joined Villa in a deal reportedly worth around £10m and is understood to be seen by the club as an exciting, long-term prospect.

Alysson has played just one full season of professional football for Gremio, featuring in 31 of the club's 38 league matches last season which concluded last month, scoring once and providing two assists.

"He is very young. He was developing in Brazil, really being fantastic as a young player," manager Emery said.

"He is a winger, playing on the right side with a left foot. We signed him thinking to exploit his potential as a winger.

"He has good dribbling and is usually playing on the right side offensively and defensively, physically doing good work.

"He can defend and attack. He is intense.

"He is young, and firstly his adaptation is in training sessions, and then in the Premier League with the demands we have."

RECOVERY ISN'T FANCY FOR DYCHE

SEAN DYCHE has challenged his players to produce their best form against the Premier League's "not as fancied" sides in their bid to climb clear of the bottom three.

Nottingham Forest have claimed 3-0 wins at Liverpool and against Tottenham since Dyche replaced Ange Postecoglou in October, but three straight defeats, including losses to Fulham and Everton, have left them in 17th place.

Dyche (left), whose side play at high-flying Aston Villa in the lunchtime kick-off today, said: "We've just shown lately, we've taken on some of the bigger teams, or the ones that are fancied every year, and done very well against them. And a couple of teams maybe not as fancied, we haven't done as well. That's probably the challenge of the group – rising to the expectation of each game rather than just big games."

Forest were in the bottom three when Dyche became their third manager this season, while Tuesday's 2-0 home defeat to Everton has left them one place above the relegation zone.

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JOG ON, THOMAS

Tottenham still giving Frank the runaround

FEEL THE HEAT
Frank has a huge job on his hands; (right) Johnson has departed

TOTTENHAM v SUNDERLAND

Premier League: Tomorrow, KO 3pm

BY **ALASDAIR GOLD**

THOMAS FRANK feels like The Running Man right now as he admits it's difficult to enjoy life at Tottenham amid the struggles of rebuilding the club.

Boss Frank, 52, often enjoys early morning runs around London's Richmond Park and believes the ups and downs at Spurs require him to power through the problems that are mounting.

Frank found himself booed by the travelling Tottenham supporters on New Year's Day as he approached them to applaud their efforts after the drab goalless draw at his old club Brentford.

The fans had sung "boring, boring Tottenham" and chanted for former players and managers during another performance lacking creativity and cohesion from the Dane's side.

The north London outfit lie 12th in the Premier League table and are going through a huge rebuilding process which has brought 13 new heads of department within the club, including Frank and CEO Vinai Venkatesham, who has replaced former chairman Daniel Levy as the top man at the club.

Ahead of Tottenham's first home game of 2026, against Sunderland tomorrow, when asked whether he was actually enjoying the challenge of stepping out of his comfort zone after nine years at Brentford, Frank could only laugh.

"That's a good question! I like that question. Let me put it this way. When you need to put in a big, big shift and it's not smooth and it's tough, it's probably difficult to enjoy it," he said.

"If I run hard, I don't enjoy that moment, but I know I need to keep my head down and run hard to get through it to get my fitness up, or win a race. We are in a situation where you need to run hard, to stay in it, to get through it.

"On the other side, when we look back on this spell or maybe this first year when it was tough, you'll think what a learning experience, it made us so much better for the future. So the short answer is, no, but the reality is you can't."

He added: "When I take myself out of it and look down, I think what a privilege to be in charge of this fantastic club in a period where it's a big transition. The transformation of 2025 has never happened as much in 140 years. There's a lot of changes but the potential is huge."

More changes are coming in the transfer window, with Brennan Johnson having already departed for Crystal Palace in a £35million deal, and Frank wants the club to push hard for signings that improve his starting line-up.

"We are there in the market and will do everything we can to improve the squad, but we should be so aware that short-term impact can't limit long-term success," he said.

"But on the flip-side, can we do something that will really improve us? I think we should go very hard for that."

HOME IN ON GLORY!

REGIS LE BRIS believes home draws against Premier League title contenders Arsenal and Manchester City have shown they can be competitive at this level.

The Black Cats earned another valuable point with a goalless draw against City on New Year's Day at the Stadium of Light, which extended their impressive unbeaten home record in the league.

That run includes a 2-2 draw with leaders Arsenal in November, when Brian Brobbey scored a last-gasp equaliser for the Black Cats, and leaves them seventh at the halfway stage of their first campaign back in the top tier.

"It's really positive for the club, for the squad, for the lads because we are playing against the best in Europe and we showed it's possible to be competitive," said Sunderland manager Le Bris (left).

"It's good for the confidence, it's good for the collective and individual projects. At the same time we know that we need to reset quickly because this league is relentless.

"I think it's important to show it's a tough place here."

BRISTOL CITY v PRESTON

Championship: Tomorrow, KO 3pm

MORSY ON QUEST FOR TOP FLIGHT

SAM MORSY admits he jumped at the chance to become a Bristol City history boy.

The veteran midfielder, who skippered Ipswich to back-to-back promotions to the top flight, arrives at Ashton Gate on a six-month deal until the end of the season after ending a spell in Kuwait.

Egypt international Morsy, 34, could figure at home to Preston after training with Gerhard Struber's squad for the past few weeks.

The former Portman Road favourite (above) wants to play a major role in City winning promotion to the Premier League for the first time. He said: "As soon as I heard of the interest, I could see it was a really good fit for me.

"Gerhard Struber has an infectious personality and is a real winner. I'm going to give it everything I've got.

"I'm fully committed to this cause and I'm joining an amazing football club."

The Robins have also signed former Liverpool winger Ranel Young, 19, to their Under-21 academy on a deal until 2027.

Struber's side can climb back into the top six with a fourth win in five against promotion rivals North End.

Paul Heckingbottom's side have lost just once in the last nine games.

The Deepdale boss said: "I think our form has changed our opponents' mentality against us."

MILLWALL v SWANSEA

Championship: Tomorrow, KO 3pm

JAY WALKS TALL AFTER RARE GOAL

JAY FULTON has hailed the Vitor Matos effect behind Swansea's stunning revival.

Five wins from the last seven have propelled the Swans eight points clear of danger since the Portuguese head coach took charge at the end of November.

Fulton (above) came off the bench to grab his first goal for 13 months in the New Year's Day win over West Brom as Matos' upwardly-mobile side made it four straight victories at home.

City's Scottish midfielder, 31, said: "The manager has come in and made it very clear the way he wants to play. From a personal point of view, he's been very good with me and given me the chance to come in and play more minutes.

"There is an awful lot of hard work going on, particularly at the top end of the pitch under the new gaffer's style.

"Confidence is high, there is a real togetherness and everyone has worked really hard for each other."

The Swans will look to continue their revival at injury-hit Millwall, who have dropped out of the play-off places after one win in six following the gritty 0-0 draw at Southampton.

Lions boss Alex Neil said: "We've had injuries and for what we have available, my players have been terrific. We've drawn with Ipswich, beaten Bristol City and gone to Southampton and taken a point. I couldn't be more pleased."

HERE WE FOE

Simms wants derby victory to help kick-start Sky Blues' title push

ELL'S BELLS
Simms looks to lead the way and firing home (below) on New Year's Day at Charlton

BIRMINGHAM v COVENTRY

Championship: Tomorrow, KO 12pm

BY **JASON MELLOR**

ELLIS SIMMS reckons the "hostile" derby trip to Birmingham tomorrow is the perfect way for Coventry to get their Premier League push back on track.

The Championship leaders enjoy an eight-point cushion at the top, but have won just two of the last seven to give the chasing pack hope of reeling them in.

Ipswich are breathing down Coventry's neck after sealing a league double over Frank Lampard's side in December.

But Simms has backed the Sky Blues to last the distance after being out in front for most of the campaign.

The former Everton striker scored his ninth goal of the season in the 1-1 draw at Charlton on New Year's Day.

He said: "We need to bounce back and hopefully get the win at Birmingham.

"The games are coming thick and fast and everyone in the squad is involved. We need not to be too down about things.

"When you're at the top of the league, you're used to winning, so when you draw a game it can feel like a loss.

"We've got to stay focused and make sure we're ready for the next game.

"It's a derby, it's going to be hostile and it will be a great atmosphere. These are the high-pressure games you look forward to. We'll have plenty of fans there and they'll get right behind us. We want to get right back on track."

Coventry are set to land Crystal Palace winger Romain Esse on loan to provide some much-needed reinforcements as Lampard's stretched squad look to keep the pursuers at bay.

The Sky Blues boss hopes to bring at least two new faces in during January to freshen things up. Coventry have a 13-day break from league action after tomorrow's derby.

Lampard said: "We've had a fantastic first half of the season and big credit to the squad.

"The boys have given everything and sometimes that can make your level come down a tiny bit, so that's where we need the freshness and the impact."

Birmingham have lost just once at home all season, but a woeful away record that's seen them beaten in nine of 13 games means they're nervously looking over their shoulder at the scrap for Championship survival.

Brum boss Chris Davies (inset, above) has been accused by fans of sounding like a stuck record in his attempts to explain his side's awful away form.

Striker Marvin Ducksch had an exchange with an angry fan after the 3-0 defeat at Watford and Davies said: "The supporters are entitled to voice their frustrations.

"They pay their money and travel a long way to watch this club and our away performances have just not been good enough."

DERBY v WREXHAM

Championship: Tomorrow, KO 3pm

EUSTACE IN TRIBUTE TO HIS BOBBY DAZZLER

GEORDIE midfielder Bobby Clark has told boss John Eustace it will be 'knee bother' to play through the pain barrier for Derby.

The Rams match-winner against Middlesbrough was carrying a painful knock from the defeat to Leicester, but it didn't stop the midfielder (left) from scoring the only goal against the Teessiders to seal just a second win in eight.

The on-loan RB Salzburg youngster, 20, is set to line up against Wrexham tomorrow.

And Eustace said: "For Bobby to start the Middlesbrough game was full credit to him.

"It's amazing, really. He took a really nasty knock to his knee against Leicester, and the way he performed was brilliant.

"We had his knee scanned and it showed there was nothing internal, so the lad put his hand up and he said, 'I'm ready to go again, don't worry'.

"It shows the character of the group we have. Everyone wants to play, and the group is really strong. Everyone is ready to do whatever it takes.

"At moments throughout this season we've been doing very well and then conceded really sloppy goals.

"During any Championship game you're going to be under the cosh and you're going to have to suffer a little bit, but where we lack maybe a little bit of quality we make up with grit and determination."

Wrexham are again sweating on the fitness of 19-goal strike duo Kieffer Moore (hamstring) and Josh Windass (calf).

The pair missed the 2-0 win over Blackburn, where their replacements, Sam Smith and Oliver Rathbone, both scored.

SHIRT SHARP SHOCK

Blades get a timely reminder

FIGHTING TALK Boss Chris Wilder wants his resurgent side to keep their focus

SHEFFIELD UTD v OXFORD

Championship: Tomorrow, KO 12pm

BY **JASON MELLOR**

CHRIS WILDER is getting shirty with his Sheffield United players to ensure they trouser all three points against Oxford.

The Blades boss has taken the unusual step of pinning West Brom and Wrexham jerseys up in the home dressing room at Bramall Lane as a warning of the dangers of letting their levels drop even by one per cent.

Wilder's troops suffered damaging defeats after no-shows at The Hawthorns and Racecourse Ground last month and the United chief said: "Those shirts are just there as a reminder to the players of what happens if we're off it performance-wise.

"We were off it at West Brom, when we rolled over, and I really didn't enjoy it.

"I struggled to hide my feelings about that, especially when there's 3000 of our fans there backing us and lots more watching on TV.

"At Wrexham we conceded ridiculous goals and gave them a chance to hurt us by offering handouts.

"We know we can hurt teams if we play like we're capable of. I want more of that feeling, so those shirts are up there as reminders.

"I don't want to see another one going up next to them for a long time."

Despite losing their first seven games, before Wilder's third return to Bramall Lane, the Blades still harbour hopes of making a push for the play-offs in the second half of the season. United are aiming for a third straight win to cut the eight-point gap to the top six as they host one of Wilder's former clubs tomorrow.

He added: "I apologised to the players because before that West Brom game I said we could go five points off the play-offs and maybe that was wrong of me.

"We've won the last two, but we know you're only as good as your last game and we have to make sure we turn up against Oxford. We're playing against a team that is fighting for their lives and we have to be absolutely bang at it.

"People will assume we just have to turn up and roll them over, but we're going to have to do a lot of things right."

Managerless Oxford are three points adrift of safety as they look to avenge the single-goal defeat at home to the Blades in September.

Spurs midfielder Jamie Donley is set to arrive on loan at a side that has won just twice in the last 13 games.

Caretaker boss Craig Short said: "Everyone is going to play their part in this busy period. It's another massive game and if we show the attitude and desire we have been doing, then we'll have a chance."

LOW POINT Japhet Tanganga can't stop Wrexham's Kieffer Moore scoring

HULL v WATFORD

Championship: Tomorrow, KO 3pm

INCE GIVES SHOUT-OUT TO JAVI

TOM INCE is making a big noise under the Watford 'whisperer' Javi Gracia.

The 33-year-old is bidding to help the Hornets to a fifth straight win after his first hat-trick for 10 years blew away Birmingham on New Year's Day.

Ince is thriving after being restored to the side since Gracia's return to Vicarage Road in October.

The veteran winger has repaid the Spaniard's faith with a string of eye-catching displays that also saw the former Liverpool and Stoke midfielder smash through the 100 career goal mark.

Ince (left) said: "Whatever the manager asks of me, I try to do it to the best of my ability.

"I love the simplicity of his game plans and the aura he has around the place, I can't fault it and it's been a breath of fresh air.

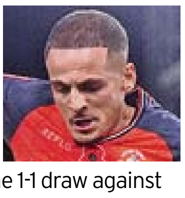
"He understands what's required without hollering or shouting. He understands the squad he's got and that a lot of the players need his arm around them.

"It was nice to get my 100th goal. I'll have a look at the table of the top 10 Championship scorers and see if I can catch a few of them before the end of the season."

Ince faces one of his ex-clubs Hull, who are out to bounce back from a first defeat in six at home to Stoke that leaves the Tigers below fourth-placed Watford on goal difference.

LEAGUE ONE ROUND-UP

ALI'S READY TO PROVE WORTH



ALI AL-HAMADI has hit back at claims he's injury prone after insisting he hopes to feel like a new January signing for LUTON.

The Ipswich striker has figured for just 32 minutes due to calf and tendon problems since joining on loan four months ago.

Ahead of the trip to DONCASTER tomorrow, the Iraq international (above) said: "It can definitely look like I'm injury prone from the outside, but injuries are part of football. I'm feeling great now and hopefully I'll be back this month."

LINCOLN have erected a huge 'tent' over their Sincil Bank playing surface to ensure it beats the big freeze for the sell-out clash with PETERBOROUGH.

EXETER are bidding for a third win in four at HUDDERSFIELD, who are up to fifth and unbeaten in six. Grecians winger Carlos Mendes Gomes said: "We are on a great run and we can take this momentum with us."

BARNSLEY skipper Luca Connell sits out the trip to PORT VALE after his red card in the 1-1 draw against Wigan left the Oakwell club without a win in four.

Boss Conor Hourihane said: "He knows it was the wrong thing to do."

MANSFIELD striker Rhys Oates has signed a 12-month contract extension to keep him at the Stags until the summer of 2027.

The 31-year-old will look to add to his seven goals this season at ROTHERHAM and boss Nigel Clough said: "Rhys has shown the impact he can have on games."

LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cardiff	23	15	3	5	41	24	48
Lincoln City	24	13	6	5	35	24	45
Bradford	23	12	7	4	32	24	43
Stockport Cty	23	11	6	6	33	29	39
Huddersfield	24	11	5	8	43	32	38
Bolton	23	10	8	5	31	22	38
Stevenage	22	10	7	5	26	18	37
Luton	24	10	5	9	33	29	35
Mansfield	23	9	5	9	31	28	32
Reading	23	8	8	7	31	28	32
Peterborough	23	10	2	11	28	28	32
AFC Wimbledn	23	9	4	10	27	31	31
Wycombe	24	7	9	8	30	28	30
Wigan	23	7	9	7	26	26	30
Exeter	23	9	2	12	23	21	29
Barnsley	21	8	5	8	33	33	29
Blackpool	24	8	5	11	30	35	29
Leyton Orient	24	8	4	12	35	41	28
Northampton	23	8	4	11	22	28	28
Burton Albion	23	7	6	10	23	31	27
Plymouth	24	8	3	13	29	39	27
Rotherham	24	6	6	12	22	35	24
Doncaster	24	6	5	13	24	41	23
Port Vale	23	4	6	13	18	31	18

LEAGUE TWO ROUND-UP

IN-FORM ISAAC A WANTED MAN

CHELTENHAM boss Steve Cotterill will not be picking up the phone to BRISTOL ROVERS counterpart Steve Evans in the tug-of-war over Isaac Hutchinson.

The 25-year-old Rovers midfielder (above) has been a revelation on loan at the Robins, with eight goals and three assists helping Cotterill's side leapfrog their West Country rivals in the battle to beat the drop.

Rovers fans are clamouring for Hutchinson's recall, but ahead of the visit by CRAWLEY, Cotterill said: "There's been a lot of talk about Isaac. He wants to stay here and he's made that clear, so it's not for us to contact Rovers.

"There's a date they can recall him and that closes in January. It's not for us to be contacting anyone."

Rovers make the long trip to relegation rivals BARROW and boss Evans said: "The intention at the minute is that Isaac will be coming back.

"There's a date on the deal that says it's finished. Cheltenham have to talk to me if they want to keep him and I'll be a bit harder."

Leaders BROMLEY hope to make it seven straight wins and 11 in the last 12 league games at home to OLDHAM.

Simon Weaver insists there are still encouraging signs as rock-bottom HARROGATE look to halt a 14-match winless league run against SWINDON.

Weaver's side haven't scored a league goal at home for almost three months, but he said: "There is light at the end of the tunnel."

LEAGUE TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bromley	24	14	6	4	42	27	48
Swindon	24	14	4	6	39	26	46
Walsall	24	13	4	7	32	23	43
Salford City	24	13	4	7	35	31	43
Cambridge	24	11	8	5	28	19	41
MK Dons	24	11	7	6	44	26	40
Notts County	24	11	6	7	36	26	39
Chesterfield	24	10	9	5	40	33	39
Colchester	24	9	9	6	38	28	36
Crewe	24	10	5	9	38	32	35
Barnet	24	9	8	7	32	26	35
Grimsby	24	9	7	8	35	30	34
Fleetwood	24	9	7	8	32	30	34
Accrington	24	9	6	9	27	26	33
Oldham	24	7	11	6	24	19	32
Gillingham	24	7	11	6	31	28	32
Tranmere	24	8	8	8	39	37	32
Cheltenham	24	8	3	13	22	41	27
Barrow	24	6	6	12	26	35	24
Bristol Rovers	24	6	3	15	21	44	21
Crawley Town	24	4	7	13	28	42	19
Shrewsbury	24	4	7	13	21	41	19
Newport Cty	24	4	5	15	24	43	17
Harrogate Tn	24	4	5	15	18	39	17

YOUR WEEKEND GUIDE TO THE PREM

THE BIG MATCH

MANCHESTER CITY v CHELSEA

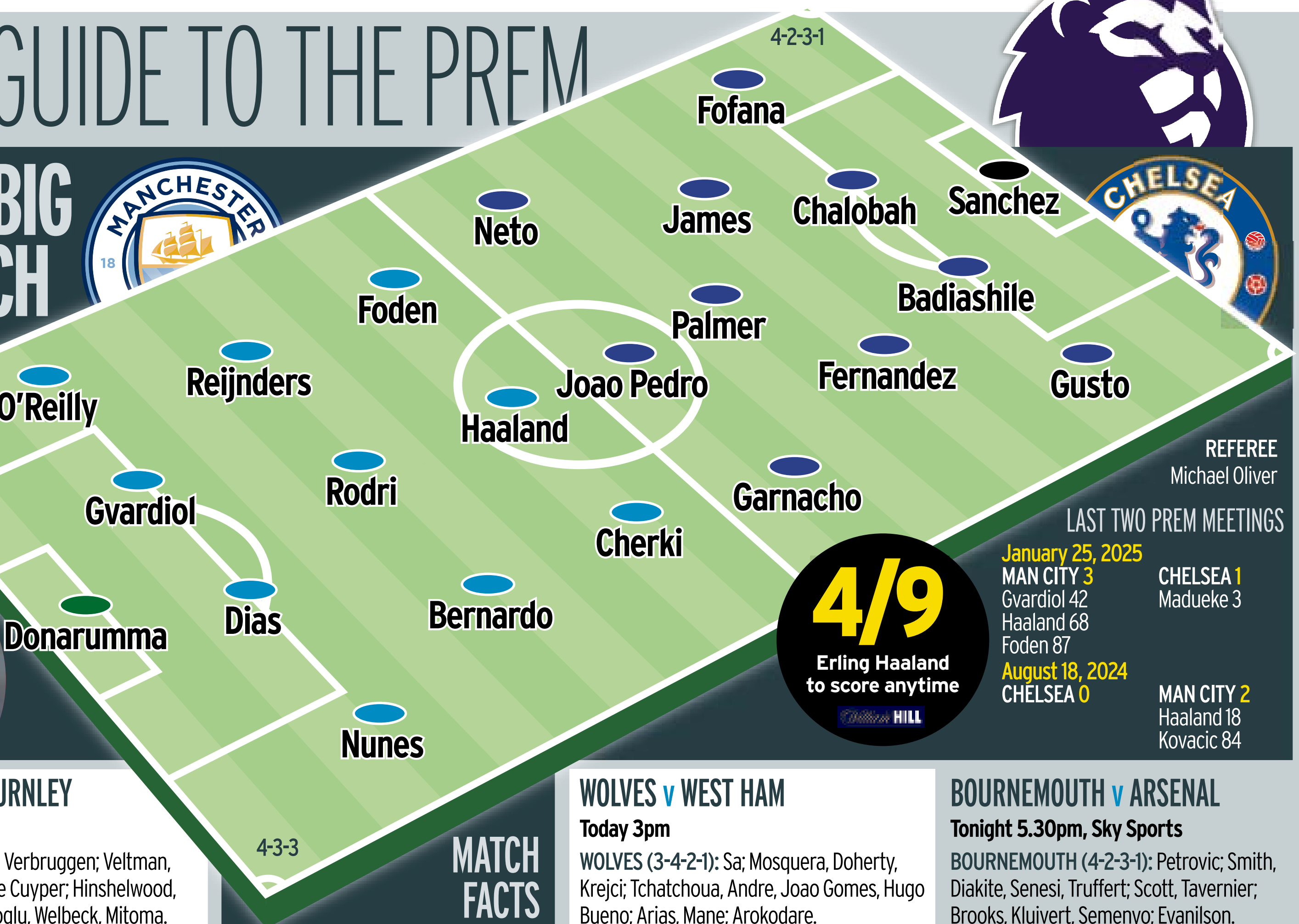
Tomorrow 5.30pm, Sky Sports

CALUM McFARLANE will be thrown in at the deep end as Chelsea look to move on from Enzo Maresca with a trip to in-form Manchester City tomorrow afternoon.

The Blues axed Maresca on New Year's Day ahead of tomorrow's trip to face his former boss Pep Guardiola's City at the Etihad.

Under-21 coach McFarlane (below) has been thrust into the dugout with Chelsea looking to address a run of just one win in their last seven league matches.

Meanwhile, City are looking to get back on track after the goalless draw at Sunderland left them four points adrift of Arsenal.



MATCH FACTS

8 Man City are unbeaten in their last eight Prem games against Chelsea (W6 D2).

22 Man City have only failed to score in one of their last 22 Prem games against Chelsea.

1 Chelsea have won just one of their last seven Premier League games (D4 L2).

REFEREE
Michael Oliver

LAST TWO PREM MEETINGS

January 25, 2025
MAN CITY 3 Gvardiol 42, Haaland 68, Foden 87
CHELSEA 1 Madueke 3

August 18, 2024
CHELSEA 0
MAN CITY 2 Haaland 18, Kovacic 84

4/9
Erling Haaland to score anytime
William HILL

ASTON VILLA v N FOREST

Today 12.30pm, Sky Sports

ASTON VILLA (4-2-3-1): Martinez; Cash, Konsa, Lindelof, Maatsen; Kamara, Tielemans; McGinn, Rogers, Buendia; Watkins.

N FOREST (4-2-3-1) Victor; Savona, Murillo, Milenkovic, Williams; Anderson, Dominguez; Hutchinson, Gibbs-White, Hudson-Odoi; Jesus.

REFEREE: Simon Hooper

6 Aston Villa are unbeaten in their last six Prem home games against Nottingham Forest.

Aston Villa to win: 3/4 William HILL

BRIGHTON v BURNLEY

Today 3pm

BRIGHTON (4-3-3): Verbruggen; Veltman, Van Hecke, Dunk, De Cuyper; Hinshelwood, Ayari, Gomez; Kadioglu, Welbeck, Mitoma.

BURNLEY (3-4-3): Dubravka; Laurent, Ekdal, Humphreys; Walker, Ugochukwu, Luis, Pires; Edwards, Broja, Tchaouna.

REFEREE: Tim Robinson

1 Brighton have lost just one of their last eight Premier League games against Burnley (W2 D5).

Draw: 3/1 William HILL

WOLVES v WEST HAM

Today 3pm

WOLVES (3-4-2-1): Sa; Mosquera, Doherty, Krejci; Tchatchoua, Andre, Joao Gomes, Hugo Bueno; Arias, Mane; Arokodare.

WEST HAM 4-2-3-1): Areola; Walker-Peters, Mavropanos, Kilman, Scarles; Magassa, Potts; Bowen, Fernandes, Paqueta; Wilson.

REFEREE: Peter Bankes

4 West Ham have lost five of their last seven Premier League away games against Wolves.

Wolves to win: 6/4 William HILL

BOURNEMOUTH v ARSENAL

Tonight 5.30pm, Sky Sports

BOURNEMOUTH (4-2-3-1): Petrovic; Smith, Diakite, Senesi, Truffert; Scott, Tavernier; Brooks, Kluivert, Semenyo; Evanilson.

ARSENAL (4-3-3): Raya; Timber, Saliba, Gabriel, Hincapie; Zubimendi, Merino, Odegaard; Saka, Jesus, Trossard.

REFEREE: Chris Kavanagh

1 Arsenal have only failed to score in one of their 16 Premier League games against Bournemouth.

Bournemouth to win: 24/5 William HILL

LEEDS UNITED v MAN UNITED

Tomorrow 12.30pm, TNT Sports

LEEDS (3-5-2): Perri; Bornauw, Bijol, Struijk; Bogle, Stach, Gruev, Aaronson, Gudmundsson; Calvert-Lewin, Nmecha.

MAN UNITED (4-2-3-1): Lammens; Dalot, Heaven, Martinez, Shaw; Casemiro, Ugarte; Dorgu, Zirkzee, Cunha; Sesko.

REFEREE: Jarred Gillett

1 Leeds have won just one of their last 19 Prem games against Manchester United (D6 L12).

Man United to win: 6/4 William HILL

EVERTON v BRENTFORD

Tomorrow 3pm, Sky Sports

EVERTON (4-2-3-1): Pickford; Mykolenko, Keane, Tarkowski, O'Brien; Iroegbunam, Garner; Grealish, Rohl, Dibling; Barry.

BRENTFORD (4-3-3): Kelleher; Kayode, Ajer, Collins, Henry; Henderson, Janelt, Yarmolyuk; Lewis-Potter, Thiago, Schade.

REFEREE: Anthony Taylor

7 Everton have lost their first league game in seven of the last eight calendar years (D1).

Draw: 21/10 William HILL

FULHAM v LIVERPOOL

Tomorrow 3pm, Sky Sports

FULHAM (4-2-3-1): Leno; Tete, Andersen, Robinson, Cuenca; Lukic, Berge; Wilson, Smith-Rowe, Kevin; Jimenez.

LIVERPOOL (4-3-3): Alisson; Bradley, Konate, Van Dijk, Kerkez; Gravenberch, Szoboszlai, Jones; Frimpong, Ekitike, Wirtz.

REFEREE: Craig Pawson

1 Fulham have won just one of their last 19 Premier League games against the reigning champions.

Liverpool to win: 19/20 William HILL

NEWCASTLE v CRYSTAL PALACE

Tomorrow 3pm, Sky Sports

NEWCASTLE (4-3-3): Pope; Miley, Thiaw, Schar, Hall; Guimaraes, Joelinton, Tonali; Gordon, Murphy, Wissa.

PALACE (3-4-2-1): Henderson; Canvot, Lacroix, Guehi; Clyne, Wharton, Lerma, Mitchell; Pino, Devenny, Mataeta.

REFEREE: John Brooks

0 Palace have failed to score in any of their last four Premier League away games against Newcastle.

Crystal Palace to win: 4/1 William HILL

TOTTENHAM v SUNDERLAND

Tomorrow 3pm, Sky Sports

TOTTENHAM (4-2-3-1) Vicario; Porro, Romero, Danso, Spence; Bentancur, Gray; Kolo Muani, Kudus, Odobert; Richarlison.

SUNDERLAND (4-2-3-1): Roefs: Mukiele, Ballard, Alderete, Cirkin; Geertruida, Xhaka. Mayenda, Le Fee, Mundle; Isidor.

REFEREE: Stuart Attwell

14 Tottenham are unbeaten in their last 14 Premier League games against Sunderland (W10 D4).

Draw: 13/5 William HILL